THE MISTAKES OF MOSES

AND OTHER SERMONS.

WM. PATTERSON.

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WILLIAM PATTERSON.

THE MISTAKES OF MOSES

AND OTHER SERMONS,

BY

REV. WILLIAM PATTERSON,

Pastor of Cooke's Presbyterian Church, Toronto.

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TO MY MOTHER,

TO WHOSE LOVE I OWE SO MUCH.

PREFACE.

This book contains the substance of sermons preached in Cooke's Presbyterian Church, Toronto. These sermons, when delivered from the pulpit, were instrumental in helping Christians and in leading many of the unsaved to put their trust in Christ. They are now sent forth with the earnest hope that they may be of some service to those who may read them.

W. P.

Toronto, Dec. 18th, 1899.

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I.

THE MISTAKES OF MOSES.

"And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens; and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren.

"And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian."—EXODUS 2: 11, 12.

"And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?"—EXODUS 3: 11.

"And Moses answered and said; But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice."—EXODUS 4: 1.

"And Moses said unto the Lord, O my Lord, I am not eloquent."—EXODUS 4: 10.

"And he said, O my Lord, send, I pray Thee, by the hand of him whom Thou wilt send."—EXODUS 4: 13.

"And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?

"And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice."—NUMBERS 20: 10, 11.

Without any exception Moses was the greatest man in the Old Testatment dispensation, and of no man is more honorable mention made in the New Testament. In Revelation, when the celestial city is spoken of, we read of the song of Moses and the Lamb. Yet this man, who holds a position second to none, made a number of mistakes. I purpose referring to three of these mistakes, and the subject will be practical as they are mistakes which Christians are likely to make.

The first mistake was after he had turned his back upon the house of Pharaoh, with all its pleasures and

prospects, and had identified himself with the despised slaves, who were being crushed under the Egyptian power. He believed that in some way, through him, these people were to be delivered, but he made a mistake by entering upon the work before he was called to it or qualified for it. His indignation at oppression and his compassion for the oppressed no doubt led him to make the mistake of slaying the Egyptian who was contending with the Hebrew. It is a mistake which Christians are likely to make when they are full of the enthusiasm of the new life. When they see iniquity abounding and the cause of God suffering, the tendency is to rush into service before they are sure that they have been called to that particular work or qualified for it. How often, for example, the student at college when reading about the multitudes in foreign lands who have never heard of the Christ, and sees around him the ravages of sin, feels like throwing his books aside and rushing into active service, forgetting that the time spent in preparation is not time wasted. John the Baptist was about thirty years old before he was called into active service, and Jesus was about the same age when He laid down the plane and left the carpenter's bench in Nazareth to preach to men concerning the kingdom of God. It is a great mistake for us to go before we are sent, or to enter upon any work before we are qualified for it. As a result of his mis-

take, Moses fled into the wilderness. The life there was very different from that which he spent in Pharaoh's court, but he had an opportunity not only of holding fellowship with God but of becoming acquainted with himself, and no doubt it was during these years of loneliness and of meditation that he came to realize how weak and helpless he was. There is nothing which will enable us so to realize the majesty and power of God and our own insignificance as the beholding of God's works in nature. The psalmist said, When I look up into the heavens which Thine own fingers framed, to the moon and the stars, then say I, What is man that Thou are mindful of him, or the son of man that Thou dost visit him?

After forty years of life in Midian the Lord appeared to Moses at Horeb, informing him that he was the chosen one to deliver Israel from the power and slavery of Egypt. Moses now makes the second mistake, to which we purpose referring, by refusing to go. First of all he realized, as no other man did, the greatness and the power and the cruelty of Egypt; and on the other hand he realized then as never before how weak and helpless he was in contrast to that mighty nation. Not only so, but he had tried to help these people in the past and had miserably failed. Putting these things together he said, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?"

How often Christian people fail to enter upon work for the same reasons. They think of the greatness of the work to be done, they think of their past failures and of their insufficiency for these things, and like Moses they say, "Who are we that we should undertake such a work?" For example, when Christians think of the power of the liquor traffic, its power in the world of politics, and its power over those who have become enslaved by it; when they think of how efforts to overthrow it have failed in the past, how little they have been able to accomplish, they become discouraged and say, "What can we do?" The same is true in regard to may other evils that have lifted up their heads in the high places, and we are liable to make the same mistake that Moses made when, looking at the greatness of Pharaoh and his own weakness, he said, "Who am I that I should go?" Yet this estimate of the power of the enemy and of his own weakness was the best qualification for the work to which he was called. If a man has a high opinion of his own ability and under-estimates the strength of the foe, he will not accomplish very much; but when he realizes the greatness of the work and his own inability to accomplish it he will fall back upon the source of all power and seek for reinforcements. The Lord met the difficulties which presented themselves to Moses in connection with this aspect of the case,

but then a new difficulty comes up, and that is with reference to the people to whom God wishes to send him. He says, "This people will not believe me." He knew how they treated him forty years before this, when he slew the Egyptian and interfered in the quarrel between the two Hebrews; now he says, "There is no use, the very people I go to deliver will not believe me, will turn against me." What a knowledge of human nature he had and how true his estimate of these people was we see from the after history. Does not the same difficulty present itself to us when entering into Christian service? The very people that we are trying to help and seeking to deliver are the people who will probably give us the most abuse. It was so in the case of our Lord—the men He came to save despised, imprisoned and crucified Him; and it has ever been the same. But what God said to Moses He said to Jeremiah, and He says to His servants in all ages, "Surely I will be with thee." Then Moses looks at it from another point of view and he says, "I am not eloquent," as if all success depended upon his eloquence. The Lord answers him by asking the question, "Who is it that made man's mouth?" Frequently, when we are called to service, we raise the same objection. It may be we have not money, or we have not talents like other people, we have little time at our disposal; and so we present these things as ex-

cuses, or, in our estimation, reasons why we should not go where we are being sent, or do what we are commanded to do. The Lord would no doubt answer us as He answered Moses, that the success of our work does not depend upon ourselves or our abilities. Not satisfied with all the promises and assurances that God had given to him, however, Moses now says, "Send, I pray Thee, by the hand of another;" and the anger of the Lord was kindled against him. It is true he went afterwards, and the success which attended his efforts was certainly marvellous, but because of the mistake which he made in not going when he was sent, Aaron, his brother, was sent with him as the spokesman, and we know from events which followed that Aaron was not a source of strength, but a source of weakness to Moses. He it was who yielded to the people and made for them the golden calf, when Moses was receiving the law in the mount. We have seen from the narrative that while it is a great mistake to enter upon service before we are qualified and have been commissioned by God, it is as great a mistake, if not greater, to refuse to go when we have been qualified and called of God. And this is applicable not only to ministers and missionaries but to every Christian, because God has a work for every man to do. We are created in Christ Jesus unto good works, and there is a sphere which He intends every Christian to occupy, and a

work He wishes every Christian to do. The practical question for us then is, "Have we entered upon some work for which we are not qualified, and to which we have not been called, or are we refusing to enter into service for which the Lord has qualified us, and to which He has called us?"

The third mistake to which we shall refer was made at the waters of Meribah, where Moses lost his patience, spoke unadvisedly to Israel and failed to give to God the glory that was due to His name. This was a great mistake, and for this sin and mistake he was severely punished. It was because of this that he was not permitted to lead Israel into the land of promise. Men tell us, of course, that if he did not enter the earthly Canaan he entered the heavenly Canaan. That is all very true; yet no greater punishment could have been inflicted upon Moses than his exclusion from the land of Canaan. Because of sin every man who left Egypt over twenty years of age died in the wilderness, save Joshua and Caleb, and now we have the great leader prohibited from entering because of what he did on this particular occasion. The question may be asked, Why was he punished so severely? We must remember that this nation was beginning its history, and it was necessary for them to realize in the clearest manner possible God's hatred of sin, and that He would not give His glory to another. The

same was true in the case of Achan at the beginning of the great campaign after they crossed the river Jordan. Also at the beginning of the Gospel dispensation we have in the case of Ananias and Sapphira a terrible judgment, but it caused fear to come upon all who heard it, and enabled them to realize how God viewed such acts. The Lord could have easily removed the consequences of Moses' sin, but for the sake of the nation Moses had to suffer for his folly. This also is a sin and mistake which Christians are liable to make. Think of all that Moses had sacrificed for that people; think of all that he had endured from them and done for them during the many years that he was with them, and still they murmured; and no doubt it seemed to him that they were getting no better, and he may have said to himself, What is the use, they are a lot of rebels? So his indignation was kindled against them and he gave expression to his thoughts. How often, when we are making sacrifices for people, and are doing all that we possibly can do in their interests, they are continually finding fault and sometimes, we think, becoming worse instead of better. There is a danger of us losing patience and looking upon them as hopelessly ungrateful rebels against God and those who are labouring for them. In Christian work there is great need for the exhortation, "Add to your virtue, patience;" and

when we see that the meekest of men became impatient and sinned so grievously along this line, there is reason for us to fear. Do we not frequently fail to give God the glory that is due unto Him? Do we always exalt the Lord in the midst of the people, and by our actions and words sanctify Him as we ought? These mistakes of Moses are recorded, not in order to lower him in our estimation, but to warn us so that we may not fall into the same errors.

Now for a moment let us glance at the one like unto Moses who came in after years, and we will see that as far as the mistakes of Moses were concerned He was unlike the great statesman. In the book of Hebrews, where the superiority of the New Testament dispensation over the Old is so clearly shown, the greatness of Christ is contrasted with that of Moses —Moses as a servant, Christ as a son—Moses the man who made mistakes, Jesus the one who never erred. He did not enter upon His special work until He was endued with the Spirit and until the hour had come. How His heart must have gone out to the multitudes that were as sheep without a shepherd, but He did not enter upon that divine work until the fullness of the time; and He commanded His disciples, when He was leaving them, to remain in Jerusalem until they would be thoroughly qualified for service. It is often far harder for the soldiers to stand by without taking

any part in the conflict while the battle is raging than it would be for them to rush into the fight. But to obey is better than sacrifice in the sight of God, and Christ was obedient even unto the death of the cross. He did not go until He was sent, but when He did receive the commission He went forth regardless of the consequences, and could say in sincerity and in truth, "My meat and My drink is to do the will of Him that sent Me." Again, we find Him continually glorifying the Father and saying, "Glorify Thyself in Thy Son." When it comes to the people, no matter how they treat Him He never becomes impatient. The disciples forsake Him, one of them denies Him, another betrays Him; He is arrested, false charges brought against Him, He is condemned, and nailed to the cross; men wag their heads at Him as they pass and spit in His face; but in all this He never becomes impatient, but cries from the cross, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." Putting together the life of Moses and the life of the One concerning whom Moses spake when he said, "A Prophet like unto me shall the Lord your God raise up unto you," we see the marvellous contrast between them. Jesus was perfect in Himself and in all that He did. The imperfections of Moses were manifest, and his mistakes glaring. Yet Moses was the greatest of mere men, and notwithstanding his many imperfections,

and his great mistakes, he was used by the Lord in a most wonderful manner. From this subject we can surely draw the conclusion that God can use us, notwithstanding our imperfections and faults. It is the line of argument that James follows in the fifth chapter of his Epistle, when speaking about the power of prayer. Lest anyone should think that absolute perfection was necessary before prayer would prevail with God, he takes as an illustration Elijah, and after stating that the prophet was a man of like passions with us he goes on to show that by his prayers he closed the heavens for three years and six months, and then by prayer he brought rain upon the thirsty earth, for though his judgment may have erred, his heart was right with God, and he was in earnest. So it was with Moses. His sincere desire was to do the will of God, and when he fell, through his mistakes and imperfections, the Lord lifted, sustained, and used him. So it will be with us, if we submit ourselves to God, and are willing to be in His hand, what the rod was in the hand of Moses, and what Moses was in the hand of God, for God is able to use the earthen vessel—even those that are marred in the making—for His own glory, and for the good of humanity.

II.

THE ABUNDANT LIFE.

"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."—JOHN 10: 10.

It is implied in this statement that the people to whom He spoke were without life, for He did not come to give men that which they were already in possession of. There are two kinds of life that He did not come to give, namely, physical life and intellectual life, though He had power to give such life. He manifested His power to give physical life by raising from the dead the widow's son at Nain, the daughter of Jairus, and Lazaraus,who had been four days in the grave, and He also showed His power to restore intellectual life by healing those in whom reason had been dethroned, and restoring them to their right mind.

But the men to whom He was speaking had physical and intellectual life, for many in those days were great thinkers and scholars,—men such as Gamaliel under whom Saul studied. But His mission was to give spiritual life; and this life man was at one time in possession of, for when Adam came from the hand of his Maker, and when God walked with him in the

garden in the cool of the day he had spiritual life and fellowship with God. That fellowship was broken, and that spiritual life destroyed when the adversary came between Adam and God. On that day our first parents died spiritually, and all the race descended from them were separated from God through the fall. It was to restore this union that Christ came, to make God and man one, and the very word atonement means at-one-ment. The divine Son of God, equal with the Father, taking upon Himself not the form of angels, but the seed of Abraham, becoming bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, coming to unite God and man, and that union which He came to effect is spoken of as life,—spiritual life.

Now this life is the gift of God, to be received by the hand of faith, as a physical gift is to be received by the physical hand. But what does He mean when He says that He is come to give them life and to give it more abundantly? Is there a distinction between life and abundant life? Does He give the life to some, and in addition to that the abundant life? We see from this text that there are degrees of life just as there are different kinds, and in order to understand the spiritual better, we may adopt our Lord's plan, in His teaching, and find out more about the spiritual through analogy with that which is natural or physical. A man may have physical life and have so little

of it that he will be unconscious that he possesses this life; and in the spiritual world are there not those possessing spiritual life in such a small degree, that they are unconscious of the possession? Some, of course, tell us that a man, if he is saved, must know it; but on this point there is room for difference of opinion. However, we are all agreed that if a man has so little physical life that he is unconscious he is in a critical state, causing anxiety to his friends, and of no use as far as advancing the interests of the world is concerned. So, if a man is unconscious of his spiritual existence he is certainly in a critical state, and those who are interested in his spiritual well-being will necessarily be anxious about him while he himself will be absolutely useless as far as advancing the cause of Christ is concerned.

There is another stage of life, however, when a man is conscious of his existence, and when all his friends know that he is alive, he may be in what we call a convalescent state, so weak that he is not able to do any work, having others wait upon him. In the church also there is a great multitude who have spiritual life, and who can say honestly that they know in whom they have believed and are persuaded that He is able to keep that which they have committed to His trust; their friends know, or believe, that they are Christians, and yet these people have so little of the

divine life that they are unable to accomplish anything in the spiritual world. To such the apostle spoke when he said they were weak and sickly and fainting, requiring to be fed on milk when they should be nourishing themselves with the strong meat.

We come now to the highest stage of life,—the abundant life. We see it in the physical world where all that has been accomplished in the past has been brought about by men who not only possessed physical life but an abundance of it. Our cities have been builded, our railways made, and all the advancement in the physical world has been accomplished by those men who had life enough and to spare. It is so in the intellectual world. Men who have had an abundance of intellectual life have brought about all the achievements that have been accomplished in the intellectual world. And is it not so in the church? All the missionary enterprises at home and abroad, works of philanthropy, everything that has been done to lift up fallen humanity and to advance the cause of Christ, has it not been accomplished not only by those who have had spiritual life, but by those who have had an abundance of it? It is not the water in the well which makes the grass grow all around it, but the water which flows out of the well. It is not the strength which we have in ourselves, but that which we are able

to give out, that accomplishes work in the physical or spiritual world.

We have these degrees of life. Does the Lord then give to one life and to another an abundance of life, or have we anything to do with the developing of this life? Take an illustration. To Israel, God gave the land of Canaan as a free gift. It was theirs on the day they crossed the Jordan, yet He told them after giving them the land that they would have every foot which they conquered. He gave them the power to conquer that land and as much of it as they conquered they possessed, but all that was left unconquered was not possessed by them. So when He gives men salvation as a free gift He tells them to work it out with fear and trembling, since it is God that worketh in them to will and to do His good pleasure; and the amount of spiritual life which we possess will depend largely upon ourselves. Take the child, for example. The child has physical life—the same kind of life that the strong man has, but not as much of it. Look at the intellectual life of the little one, it is taking notice of everything, and the parents are rejoiced because they see that it has reasoning faculties, it has the intellectual life. But what a difference between the quantity of intellectual life which the child has, and that which is possessed by a professor in a university. And in the spiritual world, when men are born

again they are spoken of as babes in Christ, who are expected to grow until they become strong men in Christ Jesus. They are also spoken of sometimes under the figure of the blade that works its way through the clods, and keeps growing and developing until it becomes the full ear with the corn in it. They are spoken of as the light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day, or as those who are going on from strength to strength until they appear before him in Zion. All this indicates development.

In order to develop physical life there are three essentials,—food, fresh air and exercise, and the same three are essential in the developing of the spiritual life. If a child is to grow and become a strong man the child must get food, and not only food but the right kind of food, food that will nourish and strengthen. So in the spiritual life the Christian must be fed. Christ has spoken of Himself as the Bread of Life, and His word is spoken of in that sense. We are exhorted to desire the sincere milk of the word that we may grow thereby. Spiritual food is as necessary to spiritual growth as physical food is to physical growth, and one reason why so many Christians have so little of this divine life is because they are starving themselves spiritually or feeding upon that which does not sufficiently nourish the divine life within them. There is such a thing in the physical world as living

skeletons,—men who have been starved for a time, and there are multitudes of spiritual skeletons in the church. A man cannot become physically strong on angel cake and mince pie, though there is nothing wrong in these things as dessert; and a Christian cannot become spiritually strong on a great deal of the light literature that is read in these days, though that literature may be harmless in itself. It has not the nourishment that is necessary to the developing of the divine life. The Word of God, biographies of the good and the great, and the best literature is essential to the spiritual and intellectual development of the Christian.

Now with regard to the air. We know in the physical world that a great deal depends upon the kind of atmosphere in which a man breathes. If it is a malarial atmosphere it is dangerous. There is a wonderful difference between a mountaineer and a man who lives in a coal-mine, or a poorly ventilated factory. In like manner there is, in the spiritual world, such a thing as a spiritual atmosphere that is created by communion with God and fellowship with Christians. Men were commanded to enter into the closet and to shut the door and hold communion with God, they were also commanded not to neglect assembling themselves together,—for as iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.

And thus people coming together, having fellowship one with another, create a spiritual atmosphere that goes far toward developing the divine life. Looking at the matter from this point of view we may be helped in the settling of some of the vexed questions which Christians often ask concerning places of questionable amusement. For example, the question is often asked, Can I go to this place or to that and be a Christian? You might just as well ask the question, Can a man work and live in a place where the air is impure? We know they can and do, but the question really is, Can a man become physically strong if he is continually or almost continually breathing in a polluted atmosphere? And then, applying this, Can a Christian become spiritually strong if he is frequently breathing in the polluted atmosphere of the ball-room and the theatre or the gambling-house? Lot was a man of God and is at the present time in heaven, yet he breathed in the polluted atmosphere of Sodom, and no one can say of him that he had an abundance of life, for he was weak and useless. And in like manner if a Christian wants to get to heaven by the skin of his teeth and is willing that the rest of the world should go down to destruction, he may do a great many things and go to a great many places and at last be saved as by fire. But if a man is anxious to carry out the will of his Master and to bring others with him

into the kingdom, it will be necessary for such a one to breathe in a more holy atmosphere than he will find in any of the places to which reference has been made.

The third essential is exercise. A man must take exercise in addition to the food and the air, if he is to become strong. And a Christian, in addition to studying the Word of God and holding communion with Him and fellowship with Christians, must exercise himself unto godliness if he is to become strong spiritually. And in taking this exercise, while the man is being strengthened by it he can at the same time be accomplishing work. In the physical world we have people who take their exercise in the gymnasium; this is all right, but nothing is accomplished by it. Others again are doing work and taking exercise at the same time, accomplishing something for humanity. Perhaps there is such a thing as spiritual gymnastics. Men may take spiritual exercise in that way, but there is a more excellent way, and it is by performing work in the taking of the exercise and thereby blessing humanity. When there is a big head of steam on in an engine, she may blow off that which she does not require, and make a considerable noise, but there is another way of blowing off that steam, by which she can at the same time carry the freight or the passengers along the line. In taking exercise the more we give the more we receive. The blacksmith, for ex-

ample, is giving out energy when he is at his work, but at the same time he is receiving strength, and the more he gives out the stronger he becomes. And so in the spiritual world, there is that which withholdeth more than is meet and tendeth to poverty, but those who give receive in return, for the more spiritual exercise we take and the more spiritual work we perform the stronger we become spiritually.

This, then, is the way in which He gives the abundance of life. He gives us the means by which we can increase the life which at first is given to us as a free gift. Without Him we can no more increase that life, than Israel could conquer Canaan without the divine help and presence. There is no use in a man praying to God for physical strength if at the same time he is violating the laws of health, or refusing to use the means by which physical strength is attained. Neither is there any use in a man asking God for abundance of spiritual life if he is violating the very laws by which this is to be attained, or neglecting the things which are essential to the development of this life.

Again, if we have this abundant life, then work becomes a pleasure. In the physical world if those who are weak and sickly try to do work it becomes a toil and a drudgery, while if there is an abundance of physical life work is a pleasure. In like manner, in the spiritual world, those who have very little of the divine life, when the Sabbath comes are heard to say,

"We ought to go to church." Those who have an abundance of this life will say, as did the psalmist, "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord." They do work because it is their duty, but when the life is abundant His yoke will be very easy, His burden exceedingly light, and His commands will not be grievous; their meat and their drink will be to do His will if they have an abundance of His life.

Now if we have not this spiritual life why is it, since He came to give it to us? Could He say of us as He said of some of the people in the days of His flesh, "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life?" How is it to be obtained? He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life. It is through faith. Then if there are those of us who have the divine life, but cannot say that we have abundance of it, who is to blame? There are multitudes who have very little physical life, but it is not their fault. They would do anything or go anywhere to increase their health that they might become strong. But in the spiritual world if we have not the abundant life is it Christ's fault or is it ours? Will we do like Adam, blame Him, or will we acknowledge that it is because we have not used the means, and from this hour forward make His word the man of our counsel, hold sweet fellowship with Him and try to carry out His

command showing to the world that, "pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

III.

PETER.

"Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man."—MATTHEW 26: 74.

It is a question if any man, save Judas Iscariot, ever fell so low or committed so great a sin as Peter did, and in order to see the enormity of his sin several things have to be taken into consideration. First of all, the wonderful way in which he was privileged. He was one of the three who beheld Christ's glory in the mount, and in some way he recognized Moses and Elias and wished to build for them tabernacles. The scene must have made a great impression on him, for in after years he refers to it in one of his epistles. Then he was in the house of Jairus when the maiden was raised from the dead, and he was among the three who were nearest the Lord during His anguish in the garden of Gethsemane. Again, he made a great confession acting as the spokesman of the twelve when he declared that Christ was the son of the living God, and Jesus informed him that he had that revelation from the Father in heaven. He made a wonderful profession of loyalty to Christ, stating that he would never forsake him. Peter was warned concerning the

dangers which lay ahead of him, and it is said that if a man is forewarned he is half-armed. Still further, he failed Christ in the hour when his presence and his help were most needed. We cannot think of that night scene, without contrasting the conduct of Peter with that of John, who was the youngest of the disciples, and who displayed the greatest courage and heroism. He was the only one to stand by his Master, when all men had forsaken Him, and when the powers of hell were against Him. On the other hand it is probable that Peter was the oldest of the apostles, the one who had braved many a storm on the Sea of Galilee and displayed great courage on many occasions; the one who should have been closest to the Master in the hour of His need, but at that time we find him in the courtyard, first denying that he knew Him, then emphasizing his denial, and finally cursing and swearing that he knew not the man. When one listens to these oaths of his and then thinks of his words in Caesarea Philippi we cannot help exclaiming, "How the mighty have fallen." Could he have fallen any lower or committed a more grevious sin against his Lord than he did on that eventful night?

But what led to this terrible fall? First of all we might look at his self-confidence, for he had unbounded confidence in himself, declaring that though all men should forsake Christ yet he would never do

such a thing. This pride and confidence in one's self as a general thing goes before a fall, but when we are thinking of this in the case of Peter do we not see traces of it sometimes in ourselves? We hear of men who have fallen and have sinned, and we are liable to say to ourselves, if not to others, we could never be guilty of such things. This pride and confidence in one's self leads to the despising of others and in the case of Peter, while he did not say it, he inferred that the others might deny Christ. The more one thinks of himself the less he will think of others, and the more confidence he has in himself the less he will have in others. Still further, this led to his rashness in the garden, for when the men came out to arrest Jesus, Peter drew the sword and rushed at them without first consulting Christ. It is the part of a soldier to wait for the command of his superior officer. It is the part of a true disciple to receive his commands from his Lord and Master. Peter did not say to Jesus, "What wilt Thou have me to do, or wherein does my duty lie?" But without asking any advice or counsel, he drew the sword and cut off the ear of the servant of the high priest, and for this act he was rebuked by Jesus and told to put the sword up again.

How often we do that which is similar. We act without taking counsel with the One whom we profess to serve, without finding out what His will is in the

matter, and what part He would have us take. The cause of Christ has always suffered from the rashness of His followers and this rashness is due in a large measure to our confidence in ourselves, in our own wisdom and in our own powers. We are frequently told that one of the causes of Peter's fall was the fact that he slept in the garden, when he should have been awake. There is no two ways, but that it was wrong on his part, but we must remember that the other disciples also slept. Then he followed afar off, but some of the others did not follow at all. They fled. Certainly it is a dangerous thing to follow afar off when in the land of the enemy. Those who are in a border land in a time of war, as a general thing, suffer more than those who are in the heart of the country, and the nearer a person is to Christ the safer he is, and the further away, the greater the danger.

Then we find him with the enemies of his Lord when he should have been with the Lord Himself. He was where he should not have been, hence he was in a place of danger. If a messenger had come from heaven he might have asked him the question that was asked of Elijah, "What doest thou here?" In after years he was often among the enemies of the Lord, but he was there for the purpose of turning them from the error of their ways, but now he is try-

ing to save his life and is in great danger of losing it, by the very efforts that he is putting forth to save it. Peter is not alone in this matter. Even in this age multitudes of Christ's professed followers are often among the enemies of the Lord when they should be with His friends, and they are there, not for the sake of turning the enemies into friends, but for the sake of gratifying their own desires, or of being amused. No doubt all these things to which we have referred had a great deal to do with Peter's fall, but we must remember that the devil played a very important part in connection with his sin. When Christ was looking forward to this night he said to Peter, "Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat." It would seem that all the powers of hell were let loose against Peter and that the great desire of the Evil One was to overthrow him, and perhaps the most important point in this whole history is the fact that Peter did not realize the greatness of the enemy with which he had to contend. Had he realized this he would not have had so much confidence in himself, he would not have slept in the garden, he would not have acted rashly without consulting his Master nor followed Him afar off, neither would he have remained with his Lord's enemies. And what was true of Peter is true of multitudes since then and now. It is because men do not realize the

strength of the forces which are mustered against them, that they so often fall. It is this thought which Paul wished to bring before the church when he said, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." And then he exhorts them to put on the whole armour of God that they may be able to withstand in the evil day.

It is the same thought that Christ brought before the disciples when He told them that their adversary, the devil, was going about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he might devour. And perhaps the weakest point in the church to-day is the fact that she does not realize the strength of the forces which are against her, for the devil is fulfilling prophecy and coming to us as an angel of light, and making many believe that there is no devil. It is because of this we go on in our own strength, and the result is we fall. When we condemn Peter for his shameful conduct on the night of the betrayal, let us not forget the tremendous powers which were against him, and the great desire on the part of the devil to have him, and also that as Satan desired to have Peter so he desires to have us, and there is no power which can save us except the power which rescued and saved Peter. To us it should be a comforting thought that

our Lord not only knows the weakness of the flesh, but He also knows the power of the adversary. He is not only able to make us strong in our weakness, but He is able also to make us more than conquerors over the enemy. This He did in the case of His apostle.

It was the prayer of Christ which saved this man when he was on the very brink of destruction. "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not," and his faith did not fail in the critical hour. The fulfilment of his Lord's prophecy concerning the thrice denial and the look of pity and of love which he received from Jesus, sent him out into the garden to remember his sin, to loathe himself and to cry mightily for forgiveness. Jesus saw the tears, heard the cries of anguish, cleansed his soul from the terrible strains, and not only restored him back to discipleship but made him one of the greatest powers for good that the world has seen.

Perhaps we have no greater illustration of what the forgiveness of Christ means than that which is exhibited in the case of Peter. In Isaiah the wicked are commanded to forsake their ways, and the ungodly their thoughts, and to turn unto the Lord with the promise that He will abundantly pardon; but it is impossible to comprehend the length and the breadth, the heighth, and the depth of the pardon-

ing love of Christ. Not only does He blot out all the past but He places the transgressor in the forefront of His triumphant army and makes him an honoured instrument in opening the door to the Gentile world, and in bringing multitudes of the Jews into the kingdom of God.

In looking at this whole scene we have brought before us man's weakness, the devil's power over man when his confidence is placed in himself, and then the power of Christ to overthrow the plans of the enemy, for by this fall Peter became a grander and greater disciple, always looking to the Lord for guidance, leaning upon the strong arm of his Master. He did more to pull down the strongholds of evil and to destroy the works of the devil than any other of the disciples, saving, perhaps, the apostle Paul. And in the last place we see the matchless compassion and tenderness of Jesus Christ in His dealing with this apostle, how He remembers him on the morning of His resurrection and tells those to whom He appeared to tell the disciples and Peter, how He appears to him and has a private interview when none of the others are present, how He commits to his care the sheep and lambs of the flock, entrusting to this disciple those who are dearest to His heart. What a warning the fall of Peter is to those who have confidence in themselves; what encouragement comes

from his restoration to those who have fallen. For the Christ who prayed that Peter's faith might not fail is now at the right hand of the Father making intercession for us.

IV.

JESUS AND NICODEMUS.

"Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews."—JOHN 3 : 1.

Night had fallen on the city, and at last the streets were stilled. The dwellers in Jerusalem had gone to their homes, and the strangers had retired to the tents which filled every vacant space in the great city during Passover week. A knock was heard at the outer gate of a humble dwelling, and a few minutes later Jesus, a young prophet of Nazareth, stood face to face with Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. The interview which followed is one of the most important given in the sacred writings. The name, the position occupied, and the religious sect to which the night visitor belonged are all given by the inspired historian; and the necessity of the new birth, the work of the Spirit, the love of the Father, the mission of the Son, the responsibility resting upon those who have heard the gospel, are all set forth by Jesus. Many blame Nicodemus for coming at night, and think it was a sign of cowardice on his part; but there is not a sentence in Scripture to justify such a theory. There was no reason why he should not have come during the day. He may have been among the depu-

tation who went down to the Jordan to inquire of John concerning his mission, or if he was not he must have heard the report which they brought back. Besides, owing to the position which he held in the great council, he had perfect liberty to ask any teacher whatever questions might suggest themselves to him, and at this time Jesus was not unpopular with the great council; the period of opposition had not set in, and no one would have thought it strange, neither would they have cast reflections upon Nicodemus if he had been seen talking with Jesus during the day. It is true John speaks of him as the one who came to Jesus by night, but that is for the sake of identifying the man; just as he speaks of himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved, or the one who leaned on His bosom at supper, and as, in the eleventh chapter, he speaks of Mary who anointed the Lord, although the story of the anointing does not come until we reach the 12th chapter, but he wishes us to understand that it is the same Mary. So when he speaks of Nicodemus in this manner we understand that nothing further is meant than that men should recognize him as the same one who had the interview with Jesus, which interview is recorded in this third chapter of John. And, from the way in which Jesus received and treated him, we must conclude that his motives in coming to Jesus were all right, but his

conceptions of the work which Jesus came to do, and of the need of Israel were all wrong. He thought that Jesus was a great teacher, come from God, and that what the nation required was such a teacher. But Jesus wished to banish from his mind this erroneous idea, and that led Him to answer Nicodemus in a way which might seem to us somewhat rude. It is true, Jesus was a teacher, and the greatest of all teachers, for He taught as never man taught, and it is also true that wherever His gospel is published men are not only blessed spiritually, but they are developed intellectually, for Christianity and education go hand in hand, but His mission to this world was not to teach them but to save them. In Israel there had been great teachers before His time—men who had come from God, men like the heroic Elijah or the seraphic Isaiah—and yet the nation kept going down step after step, until they sat as captives by the river in Babylon, where their harps hung upon the willows. But these very teachers all looked forward to a Redeemer, and Jesus wished to impress upon the mind of Nicodemus at the very outset, that what Israel required was redemption, and that He had come as their Saviour. When the angel announced His birth he said that His name was to be called Jesus, for He was to save His people from their sins. He Himself said that He had come to

seek and to save the lost, and the greatest of His apostles said that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.

In the interview He goes on to show Nicodemus what this salvation means, that it is being born again and that the new birth is brought about through the power of the spirit; that while men can no more trace the spirit in His workings than they can tell from whence the wind cometh or whither it goeth, yet they can see the results. He assures Nicodemus that this change is absolutely essential, that without it men cannot see, understand or enter into the kingdom of heaven. This change cannot be brought about by mere education; for while we have sin in the hovels of the ignorant we also have it in the palatial homes of the refined and cultured. A man must be born of water and the Spirit, said Jesus, before he can enter into the enjoyment of the new life. Then he goes on to speak of the Father's love, how that He looked down upon the race with such pity and compassion that He was willing to give His only Son that they might be saved from their sins, and become the possessors of everlasting life. He reminds Nicodemus of a scene in the wilderness, when the brazen serpent was lifted up to save the bitten Israelites, in order that He may show this ruler the part that He was to have in this work. For, as Moses

lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

He then speaks of the responsibility resting upon those who hear the story. He says men shall be condemned, and are condemned, because they have not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God.

We cannot tell what impression this discourse made upon Nicodemus at the time. He went out into the night, and we hear no more of him until we reach the seventh chapter of the same gospel. Then a meeting of the council is being held, men have been sent out to arrest Jesus, they have returned without Him, they are asked why they did not bring Him, and answer, "Never man spake like this Man." The councillors become furious, but Nicodemus asks the question, "Does our law judge any man before it hear him?" no doubt thinking that if they could hear Jesus as he heard Him, instead of desiring to arrest Him, they would fall at His feet in adoration, and become His followers.

Once more he passes from the scene, and does not appear again until the day of the crucifixion. Where he was during the mock trials we cannot tell. It is probable that when the council were being gathered together they avoided the homes of Joseph and Nico-

demus, knowing that they were friendly to Jesus. But the last great day has come, He is nailed to the cross, around it are gathered the soldiers who have in charge the execution. Outside of that we have the doctors of the law, the members of the Sanhedrim, then come the great multitude who have been crying "Away with Him," and afar off we see the little band of followers and sympathizers, among whom is His mother. The darkness has come down upon the earth, men smite their breasts in fear, the multitude melts away, and when the sun appears again we see the little company of believers standing by the foot of the cross. He commends His mother to the loving John, He cries, "It is finished," and gives up the ghost. Then two men are seen talking together. They leave the cross in company with each other, pass through the gate into the city and then they separate. One goes toward the house of the governor and the other down into the business part of the city. In a little while they return, meeting again at the cross. One of them shows a document to the officer, who is in charge of the soldiers, and when he sees it he gives permission to these men to take down the body and deal with it as they wish. The other lays down a heavy burden—a hundred pounds weight of spices, which he has bought for the embalming of the body,—and in him we recognize the night visitor, for

he is none other than Nicodemus. With loving hands they take the body from the cross, wash it, wind it in fine linen and with spices, and then bear it away to the new sepulchre in the garden. Nicodemus honored Jesus and truly Jesus honored him.

The last verses of the second chapter of John relate that many believed in His name when they saw the miracles which He did, but Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, because He knew all men. But when we come to the third chapter we find that Jesus did commit Himself unto Nicodemus, and never did He give such a revelation of Himself to anyone as He did to this man, who came to Him in the night; and no greater honor could have been conferred upon any man than that which was conferred upon Nicodemus on the day of the crucifixion.

There are three wonderful funerals spoken of in the Bible. One was that of Jacob, when all his followers and descendants, accompanied by the chariots and horsemen of Egypt, bore his remains to the land that had been promised to Abraham and to Isaac. Perhaps it was the greatest funeral the earth has ever seen. Jacob was wonderfully honored. Then we come to another funeral on Mount Nebo, when the deliverer of Israel goes up, and after viewing the land, is buried, by the angels of God, in the presence of the Creator of the universe. No man was ever

honored as Moses by having such a funeral. But when we come to this funeral in the New Testament, it was not the dead to whom the honor was done, but to the pall-bearers. They were privileged to carry that tabernacle in which the God-head had dwelt, it was to them the honor came, and the names of Joseph and Nicodemus will be had in reverence so long as the world stands, because of the part they took at that hour when hope was crushed out of the hearts of the disciples. Nicodemus made a noble confession of his Lord and Master, and he was honored by the men of his generation who believed in the Christ, and also by the Father who loved the Son. We can imagine, in after years, when the disciples have met together, an old man coming into the room and the people rising as a token of respect. We can hear the children ask, "Who is he?" and we can hear the answer, that it is Nicodemus, who bore the body of our Lord to the sepulchre; and when the end comes, we can see the devout men of Israel gather around the home in which his body lies. They think it an honor to be privileged to bear him to the last resting-place, because of the part he took in connection with their Lord and Master. And then our thoughts rise till we think we can see the everlasting gates lifted up, and the eternal doors thrown open, and we see Jesus introducing Nicodemus to the Father, and saying,

"This is the one who helped to bear My body to the tomb." Some will say that this is a stretch of imagination, but if Jesus stood at the right hand of the Father to receive His first martyr Stephen, have we not reason to believe that as great if not greater honor was conferred upon Nicodemus, and did He not say, "Whosoever, therefore, shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven."

We often speak of trusting Jesus and being able to trust Him, but have we ever thought of Christ trusting us or being able to trust us? He did not, as we have seen, commit Himself to many of those who believed on His name, but He did trust Nicodemus. We all like to be trusted by our fellow-men, and the higher these men stand in the walks of life the more we like to have their confidence, and to know that they trust us. How much greater to be trusted by One, who is King of kings, and Lord of lords. To some He has entrusted families, to some He has entrusted classes in the Sabbath School or the Mission, to some He has entrusted different departments of His work, and the question is, Will we be faithful to the trust? If we honor Him here we have the assurance that at the last He will honor us, and give to us an abundant entrance into the house not made with hands. Paul could look forward with joy to

that happy day, for he said he knew that the Lord would place upon his head a crown of righteousness, and to him that day would be a day of rejoicing.

When Nicodemus first came to Jesus he was an honest doubter, a man who was groping in the dark seeking for the light. To him much of what Jesus said seemed very mysterious, but he was one of those who were willing to be taught and willing to do the will of the Father; and so the promise of Jesus was fulfilled in his case when He said, "If any man willeth to do My will he shall know of the doctrine." It may be that the light came to him gradually, but it increased like that of the shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. And at the hour when the disciples, who had been in company with Christ for more than three years, were dejected and despairing, the faith of Nicodemus was getting stronger and clearer. As Christ was lifted on the cross he could see the fulfilment of that which he heard during his first interview with Christ, when he spoke of the Son of Man being lifted as Moses lifted the serpent.

And looking back upon this scene we think of Nicodemus as being wonderfully privileged, by being allowed to do, what he did for the body of Christ, and to speak in His defence in the council. But we forget that all of those privileges are ours. We can

speak on His behalf as Nicodemus did, we can honor Him and help Him, by honoring and helping those who have put their confidence in Him, for has He not said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." He has so identified Himself with all His followers that whatsoever we do to them is looked upon as done to Him. We have the assurance that if even a cup of cold water is given in His name it shall receive its reward. We cannot see Him with the bodily eye as Nicodemus did. He is absent from us, yet His Spirit is present with us. He has given to us great privileges, committed to many of us sacred trusts, let us so live and so act that when our eyes shall see Him we may hear from His lips the words, "Well done, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

V.

THE LOGICAL LEPERS.

"Why sit we here until we die?"—II. Kings 7: 3.

What had they to live for? We can understand young men who see visions and success ahead of them desiring to live, but these men, through their leprosy, had become unclean, and were cast out of their homes and out of the synagogues, out of society and out of the city; they knew that they were dying by inches and every day becoming more loathsome to themselves. Yet these are the men who said, Why sit we here until we die?

Death is unnatural, and all cling to life. There are only two powers which will make men desire death, either the fear of others, or of disgrace, which will lead them to end their lives, or a vision of the risen Christ, which will lead them to say as Paul said, To die is gain, For I have a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. To these men, however, life was desirable, and nothing so much dreaded as death. They had come to realize that if they remained as they were death was certain. If they went into the city they would also die, if they

went to the camp of the Syrians there was a probability that they would be killed, but there was a chance of their lives being spared. Just as a man who has been seized by a terrible disease when the physicians tell him that if the disease is left alone death is certain, but if an operation is performed the probability is that he will die, but that there is a chance for his life, he will willingly grasp at this ray of hope and submit to the operation. In like manner these men determined to go in the direction where they saw a chance of escape from that which they dreaded.

While this story is history, it also contains a parable from which we can learn spiritual lessons. When men come to realize that they are sinners and to know that if they remain as they are eternal death will be the result; and to know that they can no more escape that which they fear by going to others than the lepers could be saved by going to the besieged city, then their eyes are turned toward Christ. They may think, as the lepers did, that for them there is little hope, they have spoken against Him, they have sinned against Him, they have fought against His cause and they may fear to come, but, like the woman who spent all that she had on physicians, and was becoming worse instead of better, decided to go to Christ, and when she touched the hem of His garment she was healed, so it often is that when every

other door is shut against the sinner he seeks Christ as a last resort, and like these lepers he finds more than he even dreamed of. For they discovered an abundant supply for all their wants.

We will leave the lepers in the tents and go for a little while to the besieged city. There we find the people starving, they have become cannibals, many are dead and others are dying, and yet outside the city there is an abundance of food. They are ignorant of this, but why are they ignorant? On the day previous to this night the prophet told them that on the morrow two measures of fine flour or two measures of barley could be had for a shekel. Instead of believing him and looking hopefully to the fulfilment of the promise, they mock at his words, and a lord on whose arm the king leaned, said, If God would open windows in heaven might this thing be. We find history continually repeating itself, and in the days of Isaiah that prophet was led to cry out, "Who hath believed our report?" And when we come down to the time of our Lord we find that there were people among whom He could do no mighty works, because of their unbelief. When He went into the house of Jairus to raise the maiden from the dead they laughed Him to scorn. In all ages, and at the present time multitudes are starving for lack of spiritual food while He who is the Bread of Life is not far from

them. They have been told this, but, like the men of Samaria, they have refused to believe it, hence the message has not benefited them.

Now let us turn from the city and look again at these four men. They have gone into the first tent, found an abundant supply of food, eaten until they were satisfied. They have carried away quantities and concealed it, also gold and silver. They have gone into another tent and found great plentiness there. Then when they have taken all that they desire or can use, they say one to another, Are we doing right, while the men in the city are starving and plenty outside, not to take to them the glad tidings? If we tell them they may refuse to believe us, but then we have done our part; if they do believe us and come out and eat and live, they will always be grateful to us; on the other hand, if we refuse to tell them, they may make the discovery for themselves and then they will blame us. They will say, "If you had only told us when you first made the discovery, some of those who are now dead through the famine might have been still alive." And we will be condemned, and evil will come upon us. What a lesson we have in this for those who have come to Christ and have had all their longings and their wants satisfied. We know that in Him is a sufficiency for all, we know that multitudes are starving and perishing for

that which He can supply. If we tell them of Him they may not believe us, but then we have done our part. If they do believe us and come and receive of His fullness, then we shall receive of their gratitude for bringing them the message. On the other hand, if we fail to tell them, and if, in after years, they find Him out for themselves, they will no doubt say, "If you had told us when you first made the discovery, some of our loved ones, who have since then gone out into the darkness, might have passed from the earthly tabernacles to the house not made with hands," and for our neglect they will condemn us.

We can see the lepers, after they have made up their minds to deliver the message, going to the city. They tell their story to the porter, and to him it must have seemed wonderful. For on the day previous the enemy were surrounding the city, the porters were at the gates, the watchmen on the walls, and now for these men to come with a message that there were no enemies, but great quantities of food, of gold and silver and large numbers of horses outside the walls, was a story so strange that it was hard to believe, and the porter might have said, Hunger has turned their heads or disarranged their brains and they have become insane. Yet, this story is not so wonderful as the story of salvation which the Christian can carry to

the sinner. When we go to a man who is in the mire of sin, who, because of his iniquity, has been driven from his home and from society and perhaps cast out of the saloon where he has spent his money, and tell him that the blood of Christ will cleanse him from all sin, that he can be saved from all his iniquities and that the evil habits, which have enslaved him for years can be removed and he made more than a conqueror over sin, when we tell him that if he accepts the message and acts upon it not only will all of this take place but he will become heir to a glorious inheritance, receive a title to a mansion in the skies, some day have placed upon his head a crown of righteousness and at last become like unto the Son of Man who also is King of kings and Lord of lords. Such a message may seem very strange and improbable and no doubt it was listening to a message of this kind which led men to say of the apostles that they were beside themselves, that they were mad. But the people of Samaria found out that the story was not exaggerated; and so, when men come to Christ and receive from Him the blessings they have heard of, they can then say, as did the Queen of Sheba when she beheld the glory of Solomon, that the half had not been told.

The message of the lepers was told to the king but he was one of those wise men who think they

know everything. He said, "I know what the Syrians have done, they have gone out and hid themselves in the fields expecting us to go to their tents and then they will slay us." A servant of the king, who had less dignity but more common-sense than his majesty, suggested that they prove the story of the lepers by sending men out on some of the few horses which still remained in the city. These messengers went out and returned informing the king and the citizens that there were no enemies between the city and the river Jordan, that the way was strewn with garments, that the horses and the tents and the provisions of the Syrians were all at their disposal. Then the people rushed out to feast upon the spoils of the enemy.

It was faith which saved these starving people. The story of the lepers proved the fulfilment of the words of the prophet, and the story of the king's messengers corroborated that of the lepers. Acting on the testimony of others, these men went out and found the food which saved them from death. Looking thus from a spiritual point of view we have the prophets who spoke of the Messiah who was to come; we have the apostles who tell us of the fulfilment of that promise; we have the multitudes who have experienced the salvation and the forgiveness of God, the testimony of the Christians of all ages. If we act upon this, as did the men of Samaria, we will be saved

from spiritual death as they were saved from physical death. After they had gone out and seen for themselves and eaten of the food they could then say, "Now we believe, not because of what the prophet said, not because of what the lepers told the porter, not because of the report brought back by the king's messengers but because we have seen and partaken for ourselves." So, when we hear the story of salvation, acting upon the testimony of others our faith ventures out, we cast ourselves upon Christ, then, when His peace is come into our hearts, when we know that He has saved us from our sins, we can say we believe not because we have read the story in His word, not because we have heard the message from others, but because we have come to Him ourselves, we have tasted and we know that He is gracious and we can speak of Him as our Lord and our Saviour. This might be called faith venturing and faith verified.

Does it not seem strange that the people, to whom the prophet came telling of the provision which God was going to make for them, should be starving, while lepers, to whom no prophet came, were feasting? For that was the case on the night when the Syrians fled from their tents. And yet, in this respect, history has been repeating itself. To the Jews came the prophets, speaking of the Messiah; to these same

people came the Messiah Himself, and yet they remained outside the kingdom, while the Romans, to whom no prophet was sent, sought Christ, and of one of them He said, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." The Syrophoenicians, to whom no messenger had gone, were represented in the woman who sought help for her daughter, to whom Christ said, "Oh, woman, great is thy faith." From the east and from the west, from the north and from the south they came to Him, while the children of the kingdom and those to whom messengers had been sent remained in their unbelief. And to-day we have men in heathen nations groping in the dark yet seeking that same ray of light while multitudes in Christian lands, who have heard the story from their childhood, are still starving for lack of the bread of life because of their unbelief.

Suppose these people in the city of Samaria had refused to believe the message because of the position occupied by the messengers, what would have befallen the city? These men were lepers, despised and outcast, but the people harkened to their voice and the city was saved. Suppose that Naaman had refused to listen to the message concerning the great healer because it came from a little slave, or afterwards had refused to listen to the counsel of a servant who exhorted him to obey the voice of the prophet by dip-

ping himself in the Jordan, he would still have retained his leprosy. And yet, in all ages we find men refusing to listen to the message because the messenger does not come up to their ideal. For example, many refused to listen to Christ because of His origin or because of the village in which He was brought up, and they said, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Some rejected Him because He was a carpenter and because they knew His brothers and sisters and mother to belong to what would now be styled the common people. Others rejected His message because He was not a graduate of one of their colleges, nor a doctor of the law. In the ordinary affairs of life men do not act in this way. If a telegram comes to any of us which may bring news that will gladden our hearts or bring anguish to our souls, we do not refuse to accept it because of the messenger. He may be dressed in uniform or he may come to us bare-footed and in rags, in fact, we never think of the messenger, it is the message. So when men come to us with a message from God, if that message takes hold of us, if we realize that it is for us and that it may mean to us eternal life or eternal misery, we will cease to think so much about the messenger. If these people in Samaria had refused the message because of the messenger they would have perished. So it is to-day, it is not the messengers who save men

but the message which they bring. The message to the starving men in the city of Samaria was that there was an abundant supply of food within reach if they would only accept of it; and the message to the sinner is that in Christ all fullness dwells, that if they come to Him they will not be cast out under any condition, that if they refuse to come there is no hope since there is no other Name under heaven given among men by which we can be saved but the name of Jesus.

VI.

JONAH.

"The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; because they repented at the preaching of Jonah."—MATTHEW 12: 41.

It is reported that some men have spent considerable time measuring the mouths of whales to ascertain if it would be possible for a whale to swallow a man, and from their investigations they have come to the conclusion that the thing would be impossible and that the book of Jonah on that account is only a myth. It would have been wiser on the part of these men to have found out what the Bible did say about the fish, before they commenced their investigation; for the Bible no where associates Jonah with whales. In the book bearing his name we are simply informed that the Lord prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah; and the word which our Lord uses for the fish in the New Testament simply means a sea-monster or great fish. But the translators of the New Testament, who had probably never seen whales and knew nothing about their swallowing capacity, translated the word whale. However, if the Lord made all the fish in the sea and made Jonah, He could surely prepare a fish large enough to accommodate the prophet,

and who knows but Jonah was a small man something like Bildad, the Shuhite, or Zaccheus, who was little of stature. There are great lessons, however, which we can learn from the story of this prophet. He is the only one among the prophets who disobeyed the command of God. Other prophets, it is true, hesitated frequently when they received great commissions, because they felt their own insufficieney and realized the magnitude of the work they were called to do; but all obeyed even when they knew that they were risking their lives and incurring the wrath and displeasure of those who were in authority. But Jonah disobeyed God and fled toward Tarshish. He told his story to the proprietors, or seamen, of the little vessel, and they promised to carry him across the sea. He paid the fare but never reached the desired haven.

In the first place, we learn from this story that when a man refuses to go where God wants him to go, and to do what God wants him to do, he brings misery and unhappiness to himself; and, since no man liveth to himself, he brings unhappiness and often disaster to others How this is illustrated in the case before us. I am sure we are all agreed that Jonah was not a happy man when on board that little vessel. It is true he slept, but it was not the sleep of the just. Then as far as the vessel is coneerned, she suffered, her timbers strained under the pressure of the angry

sea; the cargo suffered for it was thrown overboard; and the merchants who owned it met with a loss, as it is probable there were no insurance companies in those days; and the fish or sea-monster which swallowed the disobedient prophet no doubt suffered considerably, at least, we would suppose so. This is always the result of disobedience. We read about the stars singing together and about the music of the spheres, but we know that in this earth of ours there is a great deal of discord and suffering. It has all come through disobedience; for through the disobedience of one man many have been made to suffer. Our first parents disobeyed. They lost the joy of the Lord, they lost the Paradise in which they were placed, they suffered, and all their descendants have suffered since that time. Not only has the disobedience affected the human race, but we read that all creation groaneth and travaileth in pain; the earth itself has been cursed and weeds and thorns grow where flowers and fruits might have been, had man harkened to the voice of his Maker. No matter where we go we see the results of disobedience, and let no one think that he can disobey God, refusing to go where the Lord wants him to go and do what the Lord wants him to do, without bringing into his own life unhappiness, and without being the means of bringing misery and unhappiness into the lives of others.

On the other hand, we see what comes from obedience. Jonah at last cries to the Lord, his voice is heard, he is delivered out of the prison-house, or whatever we may call it, and then he goes where he is wanted to go and does what he is told to do; for he enters the great city of Nineveh to deliver the message the Lord has given him. To him no doubt, it was a strange city; but his appearance and message were still stranger to the inhabitants of that city. At first they may have laughed at the man and made a mock of his message. The children would go home and tell their parents about the strange looking man they had seen and what they had heard him say. In the evening when the factories and shops closed, the employees, when coming home from work, would stop to look at him and listen to him, while many may have gone from their homes to see for themselves the man they had been hearing about. But after a time his message seemed to take hold of the people; fear took the place of mockery; his words were carried into the prison cell and they also reached the palace of the king. A great fear came over the inhabitants of Nineveh and a fast was proclaimed; sackcloth covered all the people and also the cattle; the king himself was seen sitting in sackcloth with ashes upon his head, fasting and crying to the God of Heaven to have mercy upon him and his city. Not only did they

fast and humble themselves in the sight of God, but they turned away from their iniquity; and the pitying God beheld the penitent people and had compassion upon the inhabitants of the city. Was ever a message delivered which proved more effective? Was ever a preacher more successful than Jonah when he hearkened to the voice of God and delivered the message given to him?

It is to this our Lord refers when He says, The men of Nineveh shall rise in the judgment against this generation; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah. And now, in order to see all that is involved in this sentence, and to see where the emphasis should be, it will be well for us for a few moments to take another look at this man, under whose preaching the inhabitants of this city repented. First of all he was, as we have seen, a disobedient, and the only disobedient prophet; and we know how God views disobedience, for He tells us that to obey is better than sacrifice. Then let us look at the man after he has delivered the message, and we will see the spirit he displayed. He is sorrowing, not because the people turned a deaf ear to his words, but because they repented and are being spared or saved. Some tell us, of course, that the reason why he was so annoyed was because he feared that if Nineveh was spared she would injure his own country, and it was patriotism

which led him to act as he did. Others, again, think that he was afraid he would lose his standing or dignity as a prophet, since their repentance would make it appear that his predictions did not come true; for he had cried through the streets. "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown." Some of these conjectures may be true or they may not, at best they are only conjectures. There is one thing we are sure of, the man was not glad when he saw the inhabitants of the great city being spared by the God against whom they had sinned. It seems a terrible thing to think that a man would be satisfied to see 120,000 little children perish, perhaps 600,000 of a population altogether. Yet, if we come down through the ages we will find the descendants of Jonah. The elder brother of whom our Lord speaks was closely related to Jonah. What was the cause of his anger? Was it not because the father had received back into the home the wayward and prodigal son? And did he not find fault with the father for what he did, as Jonah found fault with God for sparing the people of Nineveh? Again, if we look at the Pharisees we can easily see that they also have come down from the days of the prophet; for they were angry and said in derision concerning Jesus, "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." Jonah displayed the same spirit that these men dis-

played in our Saviour's time. And there are Jonahs in the world to-day, and sometimes they are found in the visible church.

Now, if the men of Nineveh repented at the preaching of such a man, how could the men escape, who repented not at the preaching of Jesus, who was so much greater than Jonah, who was obedient even unto death, who had compassion for the multitudes, and who was willing to sacrifice Himself, and did sacrifice Himself in order that they might be saved? The contrast between Jonah and Jesus is something marvellous, and it gives emphasis to the text, "The men of Nineveh shall rise in the judgment against this generation: for they repented at the preaching of Jonah: and behold, a greater than Jonah is here." Sometimes we have men who refuse to attend church or refuse to accept of the gospel, because they do not care very much for the messengers: in their estimation these messengers are not ideal men. But it would be hard to get a messenger worse than Jonah, to get one more disobedient or to get one with a worse spirit: and if the Ninevites repented at his preaching, these men will rise in judgment against those who are refusing the message to-day.

Again, look at Jonah's preaching, or rather at the message he had to deliver. There was not a ray of hope in that message, it was simply the doom of the

great city he was proclaiming, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown." But look at the message of Christ. It is full of promise, of invitation, of the assurance of salvation if men would only repent. Yet these men in Nineveh, having no encouragement in the message, cast themselves at the throne of God's grace, sought for mercy and found it. Surely they, repenting under such preaching, will rise in judgment against those who have listened to the gospel promises and invitations of the new Testament. For in that we have line upon line and precept upon precept, promise after promise, and invitation after invitation, and woe unto those who have turned away from the gospel message; for against them the men of Nineveh will rise in judgment.

Looking at the whole narrative we see brought out with wonderful clearness the great love and compassion of God. How He follows the disobedient prophet. Instead of letting him go and perish in his rebellion He follows him and provides a means of escape. Then we see His compassion toward the people of the great and cruel city—for it was a cruel city; His love for the little children who could not tell the right hand from the left; His love for those who had been going on blindly and in sin, ruining themselves. Truly there is a wideness in God's mercy like the wideness of the sea. We also see that love

brought out in His raising the gourd to protect Jonah and taking it away in order to teach him a lesson. He reasons with that prophet. How this reminds us of the scene to which we have referred when the father goes out and entreats the angry elder brother, pleading with him to come in. The Old Testament picture of God pleading with Jonah and the father pleading with the elder brother are very much alike. And we have every reason to believe that it was the gentleness and the love of the Lord that at last lifted this prophet out of himself and made him cry for mercy; for I think Jonah was led to see things very differently before the Lord was through with him.

And this God is our God. How often He comes to us and says, "Come now and let us reason together." He deals with us as He dealt with the prophet in the day of his disobedience; as He dealt with the great city when they repented of their sins; as He dealt with that prophet when he was displaying such a selfish and cruel spirit. How shall we escape if we sin against such love and reject Christ and His gospel? Truly it will be more tolerable for the men of Sodom in the day of judgment than for us; and the men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment against us.

VII.

THE CHURCH'S GOOD.

"I will seek thy good."—PSALM 122: 9.

This refers to Jerusalem which was everything to the Jew. It was not only the capital and seat of government but the centre of their religion, and when the psalmist said "I will seek thy good," or the good of Jerusalem, it was equivalent to saying "I will seek the good of the nation and the good of the church." As a people the Jews were patriotic. They would rather that the cunning should depart from their right hand or the tongue cleave to the roof of the mouth than that they should forget Jerusalem or the land of their fathers, and they were also zealous and devoted. Even in Paul's time he said he could bear them testimony that they had the zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. No doubt this patriotism and devotion led to the narrowness which we find characteristic of them as a people, for they looked upon the people of other nations as beneath them and even went so far as to call them Gentile dogs. It was only when the grace of God took possession of their hearts that they could say, with the apostle of the Gentiles, of one blood God hath made all nations

that dwell upon the face of the earth, and grace be with all them that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and in truth.

But Jerusalem was to the Jews, in the days of the psalmist, what the church of Jesus Christ is to the believers. They loved, prayed for, and sought the good of Jerusalem because of the associations of the past, because of all that it was to them in the present, and because of the glory which they looked forward to in the future. There is no institution around which there are so many sacred memories to the Christian as the church. Even when men have gone far away into lands where there are no Christian organizations they remember the days that are gone, when with the multitude, they went up to the house of God; and all that we have in the world that is at all desirable and valuable has come to us through the church. We talk about the comforts and the conveniences, the marvellous advancement, the wonderful discoveries of this century. But all these things that seem so wonderful in themselves and that have so lifted the race, cannot be found in lands where there is no church of Jesus Christ. It is only where the power of His gospel has touched men and taken possession of them that science, and literature, and true civilization have made such rapid strides. Contrasting the Christian nations with the non-Christian, and

countries after a missionary arrived and the church was organized, with the same countries before the gospel was preached, in them, we see clearly that all these advantages and blessings have come to us through the church. She began her work in Jerusalem, where were the thrones of David, and like the river which Ezekiel saw, kept getting wider, broader, and deeper until the influence and power of that church has touched almost every tribe and nation. She has preserved to us the Word of God, through her it has been translated, and from that Book has come forth the best and richest of our literature. At the present time the church of Christ is causing the desert to rejoice and blossom as the rose, and is making glad the solitary place. And before her there is a great and glorious future. The prophet saw her clear as the moon, bright as the sun, going forward from conquest to conquest; and we know that some day she shall encompass the earth and take possession of the kingdoms of the world for her Lord and only Head; for the uttermost parts of the earth shall become His possession. The church with her sacraments is the only divine institution we have founded by Christ, and carrying with her His promise that the gates of hell should not prevail against her. Surely then the Christian should be able to say with all his soul, "I will seek thy good."

There are two things which constitute the good of the church, namely, peace and prosperity so that when we are seeking the peace of the church we are seeking her good. In order to do this it is not necessary for a man to sacrifice his convictions or what he believes to be the truth. Among the apostles we find they had convictions, and for these they stood. Paul would not yield a principle to any man even for the sake of peace; but when it came to questions which were non-essential and of little importance, he was willing to become all things to all men in order that his work might be more effective in saving others. And in looking over the history of the church we find that a great many of what we might call church quarrels have been over things that were not essential in themselves,—that men have been striving often for prejudice instead of for conscience. "Prove all things and hold fast that which is good," is a maxim given to us by one of the inspired writers.

Neither does peace mean inactivity. There are two kinds of peace, the peace of the graveyard and the peace of the factory. In some churches, where the people are frozen together, we have the peace of the arctic regions, but Christ's cause should be like streams in the south where there is motion and movement. And when the prophet was speaking to Israel

he said to her, that if she had hearkened to the Lord's commandments she would have been as a river, not a placid lake, but a river where there is movement.

Progress and harmony constitute the peace that is desirable. How often the peace of the church has been disturbed by her professed friends and admirers. You go into a factory where the machinery is running smoothly and you see a man take a file and begin to work at one of the pistons or pieces of machinery, and when he has kept rasping for a time friction is caused, the machinery becomes heated and the peace and usefulness is destroyed until the trouble he has caused is undone. How often in a church; men and women, with their tongues, cause friction and discord, destroy the peace and mar the usefulness of that organization. An enormous amount of evil is done by the tongue which James speaks of as a little member. Imagine, if you can, Jesus having an interview with Peter and saying to him, "You are a great admirer of John, but if you only knew what John has been saying about you, you wouldn't think as much of him as you do now." You cannot imagine such a thing; and yet there are people calling themselves by the name of Christ, professing to be His followers, who in that very way are causing friction and destroying the peace of the church.

Let us return to the factory. Some of the machin-

ery is not working as it should, but you see a man pouring in some oil; then everything runs smoothly, the friction has been removed and peace restored. The Spirit of God is spoken of under the figure of oil, not only to give light, but no doubt, in this sense, to bring harmony. And with the birth of the Messiah it was said that He was to bring peace upon earth and good-will among men; and in His sermon on the mount He said, "Blessed are the peacemakers," and one of His followers has exhorted us to live peaceably with all men, as far as it is possible. Therefore, the man who is seeking the peace of the church is carrying out the spirit of Christ and furthering His cause.

Again, we are to seek the prosperity of the church. But the question may be asked, "What is prosperity?" The answer to this question will be determined by the goal for which the man is striving. If, for example, a man is striving to regain his health, that is the sole purpose for which he is travelling, to him prosperity means that he is nearing the goal and making progress. Another man is seeking an education,—learning, scholarship is his goal, and to him prosperity means that he is advancing in his studies. With another it may be wealth, and as he adds dollar to dollar and house to house he looks upon himself as prospering. When we come to the church we find that she was established for a two-fold purpose,—for

the building up and edifying of the body of Christ, the developing of the faith and Christian character of His followers, and for the saving of the lost. To the church, then, prosperity means that she is accomplishing the work for which she was instituted, and every man who is trying to turn the church away from this work is trying, consciously or unconsciously, to hinder her prosperity. Jesus came into this world to accomplish a definite work, to atone for the race by His death at Jerusalem. When Peter tried to turn Him away from that work Christ said, "Thou savorest not the things that be of God but of men," and said, "Get thee behind Me, Satan."

Everyone who is trying to help the church to fulfil her great mission and to carry out Christ's last command is seeking the good of Zion. To seek means to put forth effort. When Christ came to seek and to save the lost it meant to Him self-denial, sacrifice, and terrible effort. When men go to seek for gold or for hidden treasure, they have to deny themselves many of the comforts of life, and they have to put forth a good deal of energy. So, when the psalmist says he will seek the good of Jerusalem, it surely means that for her sake he is willing to deny himself and to make sacrifices. When one of the New Testament writers was speaking about the church and the cause of Christ, he said he was willing to spend and

be spent, willing to endure bonds and imprisonment, that the cause might be extended and his Lord glorified. It is not enough to go into a Christian assembly and listen to sermons and sing hymns and criticize the choir. If a man says that he is seeking the good of the church while he refuses to put his hand in his pocket and contribute as God has prospered him, or refuses to give his time and his talents to the cause, his profession is a vain thing in the sight of God, for by their fruits ye shall know them.

In the seeking of the church's good all can take part. There are those in the world who, through sickness, old age, or poverty, are not able to contribute anything to the well-being of the state; but there are none in the church who cannot help on the work of God. Christians are spoken of as bearing fruit in old age when others faint and fail. In this psalm men are exhorted to pray for the peace and prosperity of Jerusalem, and in this is something that every Christian can do though aged, sick or poor. And while the church owes much to those who have given of their means, contributed time and talents, she owes, perhaps, more to those who have wrestled with God in prayer for her peace and prosperity. When we pray we acknowledge the superiority of the one to whom we offer our petitions, and also our dependence upon him, and when the church recognizes Christ as

her living head, worthy of her adoration and praise, and realizes that without Him she can do nothing, then, in her conscious weakness, she becomes strong, and in His name and through His power accomplishes great things. But if we have money and time which we can contribute, prayer will not take their place. We are accepted and approved in His sight according to what we have, and not according to what we have not. If we refuse to seek the good of Zion by giving the first-fruits of our increase and honouring Him with our substance, our prayers will be an abomination in His sight. But if we are poor and penniless and have His cause on our hearts, our prayers for the peace and prosperity of the church will rise like sweet incense to His throne.

When we seek the good of the church there is also a reflex influence, for we are told in the psalm that they who love Jerusalem shall prosper. And prosperity to the Christian means growth in grace and in likeness to his Lord and Master. It is impossible to seek in the right way the advancement of Christ's cause without being benefited. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and then rest assured that, according to Christ's promise, the necessary things shall be added. For no one has forsaken the pleasures and the profits of earth for His sake, but he shall receive an hundred-fold in this life and glory

incomprehensible in the life to come. If every Christian would make the resolution "I will seek the good of the church," and would carry out that resolution, in a short time the knowledge of the Lord would cover the earth as the waters do the sea, and no one would need to say to his brother, "Know the Lord," for they would know Him, from the least to the greatest.

VIII.

SALVATION ILLUSTRATED.

"And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived."—NUMBERS 21: 9.

It was the Lord who sent the fiery serpents among the Israelites and not the devil. If the devil had been consulted he would have said, Let them alone, they will soon stone Moses and go into rebellion. But God, who had been making His goodness to pass before Israel every morning and renewing the tokens of His love every evening, brings upon them this judgment on account of their sin that He may bring them back to Himself; and so the rebellious multitudes became a praying people and ask Moses to intercede with God on their behalf. They request him to pray that the serpents be taken from them, but instead of doing that the Lord provides a remedy.

Men have often wondered why God did not take sin out of the world, but instead of taking away sin He sent a Saviour to make men more than conquerors over the sins that beset them. This remedy, which the Lord provided for the bitten Israelites, was referred to by our Saviour, and from His reference to it we learn that He is to the sin-poisoned world what

that serpent was to the bitten Israelites. In their helplessness they could do nothing for themselves nor for one another. No man can save himself, much less his brother. But when we were without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. While the remedy in Israel was provided by the Lord it had to be used by the people in order to benefit them, and while salvation is of the Lord, and Christ is the gift of the Father, men must trust in Him and look to Him with a look of faith if they are to benefit by His atonement.

Before an Israelite would think of looking to the serpent of brass it would be necessary to convince him that he was bitten and required the remedy. Just as a man who is in perfect health would not think of seeking for a physician or of taking medicine, for they that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. And unless a man is convinced that he is a sinner he will not think of seeking the Saviour, and Jesus came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. It might have been an easy matter to convince an Israelite that he was bitten and in danger, but it is often very difficult to convince men of their sins, because sin is deceitful and the devil tries to make men believe that they are better than they are, and better than those who make a profession. Conviction of sin is the first step towards salvation,

and that can only be brought about through the power of the Holy Spirit, who works through the Word of God. When Christ promised the Spirit He said that He would convince the world of sin, and it is only when He enlightens the consciences of men that they come to see themselves as lost, and then they are led to ask the question, "What must we do to be saved?"

The second thing necessary, as far as the Israelites were concerned, was to look away from themselves to the remedy provided. If, when an Israelite discovered that he was bitten and in danger, he had kept looking at the wound and bemoaning his misfortune, he would never have been healed. If, when a sinner is convinced of his sin, he keeps looking at himself he is likely to be run into the castle of Giant Despair, and to believe that there is no help for him. He must look away from himself to the Lamb of God who was lifted up on the cross, as Moses lifted the serpent in the wilderness. Now, when an Israelite discovered that he was bitten and looked away from himself to the remedy, how long did it take to heal him? It came to pass that when he looked he lived. It may have taken some time to convince him that he required the remedy, it may have taken some time to convince him that this remedy would be effective, but when he was convinced and looked, that moment

life and health was restored to him. How long does it take to save a sinner when he has come to realize that he is a sinner, and looks from himself to the Saviour? It may take some time to convince him of his need of salvation and to convince him that Jesus is the Christ, the Saviour of men, but when he is convinced and looks to Christ, how long does it take to save him? The Holy Ghost says, "Behold, now is the accepted time," and the Phillipian jailor, who sought to take away his own life, when the apostles cried out, "Do thyself no harm," believed and was baptized the same hour of the night. The three thousand were brought in on the day of Pentecost and we have numerous instances in the New Testament of those who at one moment are outside the kingdom and the next moment rejoicing in the truth.

There must be a turning-point, and in a certain sense all conversion is sudden, though in some cases men may be thinking on their ways, making up their minds to turn their feet toward His testimonies for long, while in other cases the truth flashes upon men while they are hurrying along the broadway, and instantly they are turned. It is true that at last, when Christ shall come again, the dead shall hear His voice and in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, men shall be changed; and so in a moment He can lift men

out of the death of sin into the light and the liberty of His salvation.

It is said that on one occasion Dr. Chalmers asked a man to go home and think over the matter, with reference to his salvation, and the old man turned and said to the doctor, "Suppose I would die when I was going home to think over this matter, what then?" And Dr. Chalmers remembered that the Spirit of God said, not To-morrow, but, Behold, Now.

But were all those who realized that they were bitten and heard about the remedy healed? Not unless human nature was very different then from what it is now. We can imagine one man who was told about the remedy, and he says that he cannot understand the philosophy of it, he cannot see how looking at a brazen serpent would head the wounds inflicted by a fiery serpent, and so because he cannot understand he refuses to look. How often men talk in this way concerning Christ. While the cross was a stumbling-block to the Jew it was foolishness to the Greek, and to-day to those who cannot understand, as they say, the philosophy of the plan of salvation, the cross is still foolishness, but to all who believe, the power of God and the wisdom of God.

Again, we can imagine another man in Israel, when he is told about the brazen serpent, turning his eyes toward the pole and informing Moses that

the pole does not come up to his ideal of what a pole ought to be; it is crooked and there is nothing artistic about it. If it suited him he might be induced to look to the serpent. He is informed that it is not the pole that will heal him, it is that which the pole is bearing up, but still he persists in talking about the pole. Now, what is the pole as far as we are concerned? The Christians or the church holding up Jesus Christ. And what do we find men doing in our age instead of looking to Christ? They are finding fault with the pole. The Christians are not consistent, do not live up to their profession; the church is lukewarm in what she professes to be, and because of this they have never identified themselves with Christ. They are hiding themselves behind the faults of others, but the inconsistency of church members will not save sinners. Far be it from us to say a word in favor of inconsistency or lukewarmness on the part of Christians in the church, for we are often stumbling-blocks when we should be lights. But God has nowhere asked men to look at the church and be saved or to look at the ministers and be saved, but he has said, "Look unto Me, all the ends of the earth, and be ye saved." Men make many excuses for not trusting Christ, but one of the meanest and most cowardly is the inconsistency of others.

In Israel every man who was bitten had to look for

himself, one could not look for another. So with us. Salvation does not come by proxy, every man must believe for himself. While we are bound together in society by many ties, yet we all have to stand out as individuals; and as in the physical world each one has to breathe for himself, so when it comes to the spiritual world each man must stand or fall to his own master. But while we cannot believe for others, is there not something that we can do to help others? While in Israel every man had to look for himself, we can easily imagine those bitten Israelites who had looked and obtained the healing remedy carrying the glad tidings to others who were bitten, but had not heard of the remedy. In fact, we cannot imagine a healed Israelite looking at one who was dying because he was ignorant of the brazen serpent without telling him the story and exhorting him to look.

When we apply this, while every man has to trust Christ for his own salvation, those who are saved can tell the unsaved about God's remedy for sin. John the Baptist could not save the people but he said to his followers, "Behold the Lamb of God." Andrew could not save Peter but he brought him to Christ. And when Jesus gave His last commission it was not commanding the disciples to go out and save men, but commanding them to go out and to preach the

gospel, to tell men that God had provided a way of escape, a means by which they could be saved.

Can we picture to ourselves a caravan in the desert? The people are dying for want of water, a few who are stronger than the rest have gone on ahead; they have come to an oasis where there is an abundance of water, they throw themselves down in the green grass and drink till they are satisfied, they know that their brethren are perishing for lack of water in the desert. What are these men likely to do? Will they remain where they are while they know their brethren are dying for lack of that which has satisfied them? Will they not make the desert ring with the cry, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters?" And one can hardly understand Christians, who say that they have found in Christ a remedy for their sin, One who has satisfied their longings and given rest to their troubled hearts, without a desire to bring others to a knowledge of this same Saviour. If we are doing nothing toward the salvation of others we have good reason to question our own salvation, for if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His, and Christ pleased not Himself but gave Himself a ransom for others.

Those in Israel who knew of the remedy, and refused to look, perished; but why did they perish? Was it because they were bitten or because they re-

fused the remedy? Sometimes you will hear men say that it is not fair for them to be punished on account of what Adam did. There are certain consequences of Adam's sin that we cannot get rid of, no matter how we object to them. We have sickness and death and all the misery that is in the world through the disobedience of our first parents. But God has provided a remedy. He sent His Son, who was spoken of as the second Adam, to undo, through his obedience, the evil that the first Adam brought on the race through his disobedience. And as the bitten Israelites could be restored to health through looking to the brazen serpent so sinners can have Paradise restored through trusting in Christ. Through faith in Him they can be created anew and counted righteous in the sight of God and become joint heirs with Jesus Christ. In the third of John, Jesus Himself says that men are condemned because they have not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. It is not Adam's sins that will keep us out of the kingdom, but it is the rejection of Jesus Christ. He has come to open up a new and living way to the Father, and all who come unto God through Him are healed of their diseases and freed from their sins and admitted into the divine favor and fellowship.

In Israel there was only one brazen serpent, but it was within the reach of all. There is only one Media-

tor between God and men, but His salvation is within the reach of every creature, for whosoever calleth upon Him shall be saved, and they who come to Him will in no wise be cast out. For those in Israel who rejected the remedy there was nothing but death, for those who reject Jesus Christ there is nothing but a fearful looking forward to the judgment to come, for there is no other name under heaven or given among men whereby we can be saved.

"There is Life for a look at the cruicified One,
There is life at this moment for thee;
Then look, sinner, look unto Him and be saved,
Unto Him who was nailed to the tree."

IX.

SAMSON.

"And called his name Samson."—JUDGES 13: 24.

Samson's name has found a place on the New Testament roll of honor, with those who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteouness and stopped the mouths of the lions. Unless he had been great in some sense of the word, his name would never have been associated with Abraham and Moses and Samuel; yet there are many who know something about the jawbone of the ass with which the Philistines were slain, who know very little about the man who wielded that weapon. It may be profitable for us to look at his life to see if we can gather some helpful lessons from it.

There are three children of promise spoken of in the Bible who were born when their parents were old, and Samson is one of them. To Abraham the Angel of the Covenant came and announced the birth of Isaac, to Zacharias Gabriel appeared and spoke of John, who was to be born to be a forerunner of the Lord, to prepare His way and to make the crooked places straight, and to Manoah the angel came to announce the birth of Samson and to speak of the work

he should accomplish during his life, no strong drink was to cross his lips, no razor was to touch his skin, for he was to be a Nazarite, separated unto the Lord. Those who know their Bibles are familiar with his exploits, how the spirit of the Lord came down upon him, how he battled with the Philistines and wrought deliverance for his people in Israel. That which he accomplished was through the divine power resting upon him, but we must remember that if a man is devoted to a cause, having a single aim and a definite goal for which he is striving, whether that be good or evil, he is likely to accomplish a good deal in the world. We see that in the case of some of the ancient nations, the Spartans and the Romans, whose devotion to their country and whose determination to overthrow the enemy enabled them to accomplish wonderful things. It is also seen in great movements such as Mormonism and Mohammedanism, and if we go back to the early days of Christianity we see the youthful Saul who has set himself apart for the extermination of the Christians. He accomplished so much, that the sacred historian tells us that he made havoc of the church, and men trembled when they heard that he was on his way to Damascus.

Now, if men give themselves to a cause which is doubtful or evil, and by their devotion to it accomplish so much, how much more is a man likely to

accomplish if the object is good, and if the power of God is resting upon him? But let it be remembered that this divine power will not be given to half-hearted Christians. If Christ said that he would spue out of His mouth the lukewarm, it is not likely that He will communicate to them His supernatural power. If we look back over the history of the church we find that the men who have accomplished great things were men of energy, those who went into the work with their whole soul, like the disciples whose devotion to the Master, whose desire to save men lifted them above the fear of the enemy, and enabled them to gain marvellous victories in the name of the Lord. Look at the reformers, men such as Luther, who feared not all the devils in Worms, men like Knox, whose prayers were more dreaded by the enemy than the armies of Scotland. So it has always been.

But it follows that if men are accomplishing a Christian work in pulling down the strongholds of evil, the enemy against whom they are fighting will lay all kinds of plans, and resort to all kinds of devices to overthrow those who are so injuring them. This was true in the case of Samson, the Philistines resorted to every method to find out the secret of his power, and to overthrow the one who was bringing such disaster into their ranks. It is so in the spiritual world, the more we are doing to pull down the strong-

holds of evil the greater will be the desire on the part of the Evil One to disable us in the work. I know that there are some people who tell us they have risen to such a height that the devil never troubles them and they have no temptations. If this be so there must be a reason for it. We can imagine a man in Israel in the days of Samson, dressing his vineyard, planting the seed in the fields, caring for it, and in time of harvest the Philistines coming to reap the fruit of his toil. If this man falls back, lets them have their own way, there is no reason why they should molest him, he has not interfered with them, they have got all they want. But it was different with Samson, he was beating them back, rescuing from them what they were trying to carry away, hence their efforts are turned against him.

So in our age, when the devil, through his agencies, is trying to take away the Sabbath, to drag down through strong drink, gambling, and pernicious literature, the very best and bravest of the land, if men are so good that they will not lift up their voice against these evils, will not molest the devil or interfere with him in his work of destruction, why should he bother himself with them? He hasn't time to attend to such people, it is only those who are waging war against him. It is contrary to the Old Testament, contrary to the teaching of the New Testa-

ment, and contrary to common sense, that the devil should not bother those who are bothering him. Take the case of our Saviour when He was born into the world, why have we the slaughter of the children in Rama? Why have we that descriptive scene in Revelation concerning the dragon, where he is trying to destroy the child and the woman? Why have we these terrible temptations in the wilderness? Is it not because He came to crush the head of the serpent and destroy the works of the devil? And do we not hear the devils say to Him, "We know Thee who Thou art, art Thou come to torment us before the time?" It is said that at the close of the temptation in the wilderness the devil left Him for a season, but it was only for a season. He even entered into His apostle Peter to try to turn Christ from going up to Jerusalem to accomplish the great work for which He was born, and for which He came into the world. All through Christ's ministry the devil dogged His footsteps and the powers of darkness were round and about Him. And surely the disciple is not above His Master, or the servant above His Lord. The more we are doing to overthrow the evil that is enslaving our fellow-men the greater will the desire be on the part of the devil to shear us of our power, and to disable us in the work.

This is wonderfully illustrated in the case of Sam-

son. A reward was offered for the secret of his power, and he was betrayed, not by a Judas, but by a Delilah, who got almost thirty-seven times as much for her treachery as Judas got for his. They have gained their point at last, the vow of his consecration is broken, the Lord has departed from him, the strength with which he accomplished so much in the past is now gone, and he is carried captive by the enemy to the house of their god; his eyes are put out with hot irons, he is made to grind at the mill and make sport for those who hate both him and his nation. It is a pitiable sight. When one looks at him one can see a picture of the nation to which he belonged, a picture of the Christian church, and a picture of individual Christians. For, like Samson, that nation was in a certain sense a Nazarite, called out from among the nations of the earth, consecrated to God, set apart to glorify His name and to do His bidding. While the nation remained true to her vows, she was able to defy the enemy, for no weapon formed against her prospered; but when she was led away, and broke her vows, then she became helpless in the hand of the enemy, like Samson in the hands of the Philistines, and, like him, she knew not when her strength was gone. She allowed the enemy to come up around the holy city, thinking she could shake herself loose from the foe as on former occasions, not knowing that the

Lord had departed from her. But she is carried away to Babylon, and when we see the people sitting by the rivers, their harps hanging upon the willows while the Babylonians are mocking and asking for songs of Zion, do we not see a picture of Samson sitting in the house of Dagon while he is being mocked by the enemy? Or take the church established by Christ, called out from the world, having His vows resting upon her; she goes forth against the enemy as Samson went against the Philistines, there is nothing too hard for her; kingdom after kingdom crumbles before her till she even ascends the throne of the Caesers, but when she is led away she is shorn of her strength and then mocked at by men.

How often the church has become as helpless to accomplish the work for which she was instituted, as Samson was helpless to deliver Israel when he was in the power of the enemy. How often the world has laughed at the church and said, you tell us of the exploits and the victories of the past, but what are you accomplishing now? How often this has happened with individual Christians. Here is a man who in the strength and power of God has done great things. Multitudes have been roused up and brought out of darkness into light through the supernatural power resting upon him, but he has been led away by the

enemy, shorn of his strength, and then he becomes the sport of those who at one time feared him.

It is a dark picture, but we have to bless God that the history does not stop here. We have seen the power of a sacred life in Samson, we have seen in him also a picture of the nation in her consecration, and of the church when she had a single eye and a definite aim in view; then we have seen the power of the enemy brought against this judge of Israel, against the nation, against the church; we have seen how evil has apparently triumphed, and how he who at one time was so feared is now being mocked. Now we are going to see a picture of the love of God, that love which will not let His people go. Samson is punished for his sin, but when he is alone and has time to think, God sees the tears that fall from the sightless eyes and hears the cry of penitence that arises from the crushed and broken spirit. He causes the strength to come back to that man, who is now willing to redeem the time and sacrifice himself for the cause he has betrayed. It was through his own sin that he fell, and now he wishes to dedicate himself again to the God in whose strength he went forward in former days.

A great opportunity has come. From all parts of the land the Philistines have gathered together to give thanks to their god whom they credit with de-

livering Samson into their hands. They have come to the temple, three thousand of them are on the house-top and the inside is filled. They are to bring out this man so that he may make sport for them. It may be that it was a captive Hebrew youth who was Samson's caretaker. The lad leads him into the temple, perhaps Samson informs him as to what will follow, and tells him to take the news to his brethren. Then he asks liberty to lean and put his arms against the pillars upon which the temple rests, and when the multitudes are mocking he cries mightily to God for strength. We hear the laughter and joy of this multitude who are mocking the man of God, then we hear the crash, and the cry of anguish going up from those who are falling and being crushed with the building that has tumbled down over them. In a few minutes the silence of death reigns. News of this event is carried to the brethren of Samson, they come down, clear away the debris, pick out the body, take it away and bury it in the sepulchre of his fathers, and the sacred historians tell us that he was one of those who through faith subdued kingdoms.

Is this not true also of the nation? We have seen her being mocked in Babylon, but have we not seen her brought back again to the land of promise and to the city of David? Have we not seen the temple rising once more in its glory, and the walls

being builded around that city that had been destroyed by the enemy in the days of Israel's weakness? Have we not seen the same thing as far as the church is concerned? Surely it was her time of weakness during the dark ages when men mocked at things sacred, and when faith required the light of a candle at noon-day. But did we not see in the days of the reformation the wonderful restoration of that power? So, in the lives of men who have become backsliders, who have sold themselves and broken their vows, they have heard the voice of God saying, "I will heal thy backslidings, and I will love thee freely."

Looking at the life of this man we not only see the power of consecration to God but we see the danger in which his servants stand, the necessity of the exhortation of the apostle to put on the whole armour of God, that we may be able to stand in the evil day. And then for those who have fallen through the power of temptation there is surely much encouragement, for the God of Samson is our God, the One who restored his strength and enabled him to accomplish more for Israel in the last day of his life, than he was able to accomplish during all the previous years; that same God is able not only to restore the backsliding, but to grant power, so that in His name they may accomplish marvellous things, for the arm that is strong to smite, is also strong to save.

X.

THE WATER OF LIFE.

"If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou would'st have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water."—JOHN 4: 10.

Our Lord, in His teaching, had a wonderful faculty of lifting the thoughts of His hearers from the physical to the spiritual, from the seen to the unseen. This is beautifully illustrated throughout the gospel by John, where He so frequently speaks of the bread of life, and of the water of life. Some time ago I read a letter written by a man who had very little use for the church, and in it he said that he could not afford the luxury of religion or Christianity. It is worthy of note, however, that our Lord never speaks of His salvation as a luxury, but as a necessity, and when He is using earthly things by way of comparison or contrast, He never uses those things which are spoken of as the luxuries of life, but the things which are essential to life. We can do with or without luxuries, but we cannot do without the things which are essential; and in the physical world bread and water are essential to physical life—without them life cannot be sustained. And these are the

things He uses in order to convey to the mind spiritual truths. He speaks of Himself as the bread of life and as the water of life, indicating very clearly that what these things are in the physical world He is in the spiritual world, and that it is as impossible for the soul to have life without Him as it is for the body to be sustained without these essentials.

There are many things that water does, and perhaps, looking at them will enable us to realize more clearly what is accomplished by Christ's salvation. For example, water has in it a cleansing power. Look at those who are coming out of the coal mine—covered with coal dust—after they have gone to the bath and been cleansed a wonderful change has come over them. What water does in the cleansing of our garments and our persons, the salvation of Christ will do for our souls. By it we are cleansed from the defilement of sin, and the heart is purified. Our thoughts are changed and our whole nature is transformed.

Again, when applied to the earth, water has the power of making it fruitful, it causes the earth to bring forth that which sustains the life upon it. The valley or plains around Salt Lake City were at one time barren and unfruitful, but the Mormons used the mountain streams to irrigate the country, and through that water, the plains have become wonder-

fully fruitful, and the desert has rejoiced and is blossoming as the rose. In like manner the salvation of Christ makes lives, which have heretofore been useless and unprofitable, useful and beautiful. There are multitudes in the world who are endowed with talents and faculties, but all their powers are being wasted, and as far as helping humanity is concerned, they are as useless as the American desert. But so soon as the truth of Christ touches such hearts, the lives are changed, and they become a blessing to humanity. The man who stole provides things honest in the sight of all men, and the one who was a mere parasite becomes a blessing to others. How frequently we see this illustrated in the lives of men and women in every community.

Then there is nothing more plentiful and more free than water, there is an abundant supply in the earth for all the inhabitants. It is true that in our cities we have to pay for the water, but after all it is not the water we are paying for, it is the bringing of it from certain localities to the homes where it is used. Any one can go out to the great lakes, to the broad rivers or to the numerous little streams and get all the water he wishes free of charge. Thus it is with the salvation of Christ, there is an abundance for all. If the spiritual wants of every individual upon the earth were supplied there would not only be

enough but to spare, and it is free. Of course, it costs money to build places of worship, to translate the scriptures, and to carry the missionaries across the sea to the region beyond, but as far as salvation itself is concerned, it is as free as the water in our rivers or our lakes, and it is as abundant.

But of these things this woman was ignorant, hence our Lord says, "If thou hadst known the gift of God and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water." Nevertheless, while she was ignorant concerning this, we must admit that she was a woman of considerable ability, no matter what her moral life may have been. Men frequently tell us that when she asked the question as to where the true place of worship was she was trying to turn Christ's thoughts from her past life. We have no authority for making this statement. It may be that she had done a great deal of thinking previous to this, concerning the two places of worship. She knew that the Jews went to Jerusalem and that her own people worshipped on Mount Gerizim, she knew that there was so little in common between the two that if one was right, the other must be wrong. This great problem had been thought out by her and lay heavy on her mind, and the moment that Jesus revealed to her her past life it dawned upon her

that He was a prophet, and she asks the question, "Ought men to worship in Jerusalem, or in Gerizim?" He does not take her to task and say, "You are trying to turn my thoughts from your life," but instead of that He reveals to her the great truths concerning true worship. He shows to her that while salvation is of the Jews, yet the time is coming, yea, is come, when true worship will not depend on the locality or the attitude of the worshipper, and that it does not matter whether men assemble under the blue canopy of heaven, in the magnificent cathedral, or in the humble cottage, if their hearts are right their worship will be acceptable, for while man looketh upon the outward appearance God looketh upon the heart. He informs her that God is a spirit, and they who worship must worship Him in spirit and in truth. Then she tells Him that when Messias cometh He will make known all things to them. Jesus then reveals Himself to her, that He is the Messiah, concerning whom she had thought so much, and for whom she so often longed. A new joy fills her soul, she forgets her waterpot and rushes away to tell the men of the village, and at this point His disciples arrive.

Now in the text our Lord informed her that it was her ignorance which kept her from asking that which He had to give—her ignorance of the gift and

also of the giver, and it is ignorance which keeps very many poor in this world, and reduces many from wealth to poverty. It is ignorance that keeps multitudes out of the kingdom of God, and yet men do not like to be told that they are ignorant, there is nothing they will resent more quickly, still we see how it works. Here is a man, for example, in poor circumstances, living in a great city, he tells us that when he came to the city he could have bought land for about as much per acre as it is now sold per foot; if he had only known that the city was to grow at such a rate he could have been a millionaire by buying the land when it was so cheap and selling at such an enormous advance. But he did not know, he was ignorant of that which was going to happen, and so his ignorance has kept him in poverty. Here is another man who at one time had enormous wealth, but now he is poor. He is thinking of the past, and the thoughts are bitter, he is struggling to make ends meet, and he informs us that had he known that the bank or the company, in which he was investing his money, was going to fail, he would not have made the investments, hence he would not have lost his wealth. But he did not know, he was ignorant of what was going to happen, and we see the results. Lifting this from the physical into the spiritual world we see a man going along a way which seems to him right.

If he only knew that it would end in death, he would cease to travel in the direction in which he is going. We see men being led into sin,—if they only knew that they were being led as oxen to the slaughter, or as fools to the correction of the stocks, how different things would be with them; but they do not know, they are ignorant of the devices of the evil one for he hath blinded their minds. Take Jerusalem, Christ said, "Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, if thou hadst known," but Jerusalem was ignorant of the fact that her King was within her walls, and that His rejection meant her final doom. We might go on in this way, getting illustration after illustration, but the question will be asked, Is there no way of getting information that will save men from going down to destruction?

There is. In the physical world man cannot tell what turn affairs may take in the future. They cannot tell very far ahead whether prices will go up or down, but when it comes to the spiritual world the whole Bible has been given to us in order that the future may be revealed, that men may cease to go in the dark, that they may walk in the light. Christ came to reveal to us the Father, and this Word of His reveals to us the way that is safe, and throws a lurid light upon the path that leads to death; it is full of warnings and full of promises. And men are

anxious to know concerning the future. It is because of this anxiety that such fads and deceptions as spiritualism exist. Many are rushing to these broken cisterns, these false guides, while they are turning their backs upon the only book that can reveal to man that which lies ahead of him. If I go to a man and inform him that I have received some messages, through which I can put him in the way of making ten thousand dollars, or of becoming very wealthy, provided, he will follow my advice, how he will listen, and how interested he will become. But if I go to the same man and inform him that through information, which I have received from reliable documents, I can put him in the way of becoming heir to an inheritance that is incorruptible, of receiving a title to a mansion in the heavens, of becoming a joint heir with the King of kings, and an heir of the God of heaven, he will turn away from me and say, "I want something that is practical." The god of this world so blinding men's minds that they stop their ears to the truth and close their eyes to the light, lest they should hear with their ears, see with their eyes, understand with their hearts, and be converted. God has given to us a revelation, and wishes to remove from us all ignorance concerning the destination which lies ahead of us; but because men love darkness rather than light, they turn away from this

information, which would remove the ignorance that is ruining such numbers.

It was not so, however, with this woman. She was one whose mind was open to conviction, she was an honest doubter it may be, but one who was seeking after truth and light, and so when she found this One whom she perceived to be a prophet, she was willing to listen to His teachings, she opened her heart to receive His message, she came to know Him as the true giver, and His as the only gift. We must believe that she received from Him that which He was willing to give. And this gift is to be had for the asking. "Thou wouldest have asked of Him and He would have given thee the living water." Free, without money and without price, as every gift must be; for a gift is something which we receive without giving any compensation, else it ceases to be a gift. We have it on His own authority that if we ask we shall receive, and if we seek we shall find; and if we go through the New Testament from the beginning to the end we cannot find a single request made by any of His people which He refused to grant. They come to Him asking for blessings for their children and the blessings are granted; they come asking for healing for their servants, and the healing is given; they come asking for themselves, and they get more than they asked; but there is not a single instance

on record where He refused to give a blessing when it was asked of Him. Therefore He can say to this woman, "Thou wouldest have asked and He would have given thee." Ask and ye shall receive this living water.

And in addition to all that we have said concerning what this salvation will do for us there is still another point. It will not only quench the thirst but it will give abiding satisfaction. This is the point of contrast which He drew between the living water and the water which the woman was drawing. Of it He said, "Whosoever drinketh he shall thirst again, but if a man drinketh the water that I shall give him he shall never thirst, for it shall be a well of water springing up into everlasting life." In other words, the man who receives from Christ and becomes a Christian is independent of his environment. A man of the world may be compared to a city dependent upon outside supply, say, of bread and water. While the supply is abundant the people in the city are all right and can enjoy themselves, but if the supply is cut off by an enemy they must either perish or surrender. But the Christian is like a city fortified, having within itself that which will supply all the needs of the people, independent of the outside world. Here is a man without Christ. He has joy and gladness in his life because of his good health, because of

his prosperity, and all the pleasures that come to him from life. But his health fails, his riches make wings for themselves and leave him, and he is helpless, the thoughts of the past fill him with bitterness, he has no hope as far as the future is concerned. On the other hand, the Christian has the joy within, and like Habbakuk he can say, "Though my flock be cut off; though famine pine in empty stalls where herds were wont to be, yet will I rejoice in the Lord and in the Lord will I be glad." The Christian is not depending on the outside world for his joy, because the salvation of Christ is like a well of water within him, springing up into everlasting life. If he is in prison and his feet made fast in stocks, he can even sing there, for his God gives to him songs in the night. Therefore, the figure which our Lord uses should bring wonderful comfort and consolation to believers,—knowing that when they have Christ they have everything and abound. But the man without Christ is like those who are drinking of the water which only gives temporary satisfaction, for the fashion and the pleasures of this world are shortlived and are passing away.

As soon as this woman realized who He was and what the gift meant, she made it her own, and her spirit rejoiced in that joy that is past comprehension; and a great desire took hold of her to bring to others

the news of that which had made her own heart glad. So we find her forgetting or leaving the water-pot, rushing to the village and exhorting the inhabitants to come and see the man who told her all things, the One whom she believed to be the Messiah. This is another characteristic of His salvation—when we receive it in its fullness we cannot keep it to ourselves, like the well of water it is springing up and flowing over, touching other lives and blessing other communities.

XI.

THE VISION OF THE DRY BONES.

"But there was no breath in them."—EZEKIEL 37 : 8.

A wonderful change had come over them, bone had come to his bone, the sinews, the flesh, and the skin covered them and they lay like an army of warriors taking their rest. But there was no life in them. Some tell us that this vision of Ezekiel was brought about through natural causes, that the prophet, on his way to Babylon, passed one of those valleys where a great battle had been fought. The bones of the slain were lying in the valley—very many and very dry. When he looked at them he began to think—and one must think when he is in a graveyard—that at one time they had formed bodies in which men dwelt. When he went to sleep these waking thoughts wove themselves into the vision which we have recorded here.

Taking it for granted that this was the case, it does not in any way interfere with the divine lesson which the Lord wished to teach the prophet, and through him to teach succeeding ages. Peter went home hungry, and while they were preparing his food he went up and lay down on the house-top, fell

asleep, saw a sheet let down from heaven containing all manner of living things, was commanded to kill and eat. It was natural for a hungry man to dream about food, but in that way God taught him the great lesson, that the Gentiles were to be received into the church as well as the Jews, and that what God had accepted and cleansed was not to be rejected or looked upon as unclean. It may be that the first purpose of the vision was to encourage the prophet, for prophets, like other men, became discouraged, and in such seasons God did not cast them off but encouraged them. This we see illustrated in the case of Elijah, when he lay under the juniper tree, wishing to die. It may seem a strange way of encouraging a man to show him such a vision, but we are to remember that God's ways are not our ways. When we wish to encourage people we generally minimize and make light of the difficulties which lie before them, but when God wishes to encourage men, He shows them the rivers they must cross at their broadest, and the mountains they have to scale at their highest, and then He tells them to go on in His strength, and the mountains shall become plains, and the difficulties shall disappear. When the Lord Jesus was sending out the disciples, He told them that they were going out as sheep among wolves, that the wolves would come in sheep's clothing, that men would cast them

out of the synagogues and think they were doing God's service, when they were killing his followers, and then He added, "Fear not, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom, and no weapon formed against you shall prosper."

These bones represent the whole house of Israel. The nation, at one time, was the body politic, but in the days of Ezekiel the people were scattered abroad. God told the prophet that as these bones came together and became a great army, so the people would come together and be restored to their own land. The prophecy may have had its fulfilment in the restoration from Babylon, or there may be a larger fulfilment yet in store for the dispersed of that nation. And some tell us that we have no right to use this vision in a spiritual sense, that it referred to Israel as a nation, and to her restoration to her native land. But we must remember that a great deal of prophecy has a two-fold meaning. It is intended for the people to whom it was given, but it has also a meaning for the generations to follow. This was intended to teach Ezekiel concerning Israel as a nation, but surely it is also intended to teach us great spiritual lessons since men, who are separated from God, both Jews and Gentiles, are represented as dead; and since the saving of these men is spoken of as life from the dead

and as the resurrection, we can see in this, great and encouraging lessons.

The same methods and means were used to save the Gentiles, in the days of the Lord, and in the days of the apostles, as were used to save the Jews. Peter preached the same truth in the house of Cornelius that he preached in the city of Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, and the Holy Ghost came down upon the Gentiles as He did upon the Jews.

Now, in this vision we have three essentials in order that life might be brought to the dead. First of all, we have the man Ezekiel; second, we have the Word of God, the message he delivered; third, we have the Spirit of God, who breathed upon the slain and then they became alive. Now these three are essentials in the salvation of Jews or Gentiles. God uses human instrumentality. Even in the conversion of Saul the scales did not fall from his eyes until the old Christian laid his hands upon his head and said, "Brother Saul, receive thy sight." We have the treasure in earthen vessels, and God has decreed that by the foolishness of preaching, men are to be saved. But what kind of men does God use in this work?

The first thing that he does with Ezekiel is to test his faith. After showing him the dry bones he said to him, "Can these bones live?" If Ezekiel had said, No, it is impossible, God would probably have used

another to accomplish His work, but while it seemed impossible and improbable to Ezekiel, yet he knew that nothing was impossible with God, and he answered, "Lord God, Thou knowest." In order to be instrumental in saving others, we must have faith, not in humanity, but in the God of humanity. We must realize, like the apostle, that God is able to save to the uttermost, and that there is nothing too hard for Him. Such faith is honoring to God, and such faith will keep us from giving up the hardest characters as beyond the power of God.

Second, the Word of God is essential. The Lord told him to prophesy and to say, Thus saith the Lord. In this work our illustrations, our stories and anecdotes may be of great service in arresting the attention and preparing men to receive the truth of God. They are, in this respect, what ploughs and harrows and such like are in the physical world. They do not produce a harvest, but they prepare the ground for the seed which alone can produce the harvest. And so the Word of God is spoken of as seed that liveth and abideth, and bringeth forth from thirty to an hundred fold. And it is concerning this Word that God has said, "It shall not return unto Me void." In reading the history of the church, we discover that all those who have been instrumental in winning men to Christ have been loyal to the Word

of God, and have declared its truths faithfully. But we may have men of God declaring the truth of God, making a wonderful impression upon those who hear, and yet those hearers may not be saved. When John the Baptist preached before Herod he made a great impression upon the monarch, and no doubt influenced his life, yet Herod never entered the kingdom. After Ezekiel had spoken to these bones as he was commanded, there was a wonderful change, there was even a semblance of life, but there was no life; and if he had stopped there they would have gone back to their former state, and would have become bones again. So, when men are brought under the power of the truth, convicted of sin, their outward lives may be changed, a great reformation may have taken place, but if they are without the divine life they will go back to their former state, and the last state will be as the first. If, however, Ezekiel can get life into these men they cannot go back to bones so long as that life is there, and if spiritual life enters into those men who have heard the truth they will not go back to their former state so long as that spiritual life is there. It is true, they may sleep and sometimes become indifferent, but there is a great difference between a man who is asleep and a man who is dead. You can wake the one, but the other responds not to your call.

That brings us to the third essential—the Spirit of God. Ezekiel cried to the winds, and the breath breathed into the slain, and they lived, and stood on their feet, an exceeding great army. So, the Holy Spirit is the third essential in this work of bringing men to Christ. Jesus put great emphasis upon this when He commanded the disciples not to leave Jerusalem until they would be endued with the Spirit. It is very necessary that we should distinguish between reformation and regeneration. We cannot have regeneration without reformation, but we may have reformation without regeneration. The reason why so many, in times of revival, who have made a fair start go back to their former lives, is because they have only been reformed and not been regenerated. A great need of the church to-day is the power of the Holy Spirit to accompany the Word as it is taught in the homes, in the Sabbath School, or preached from the pulpit.

But, some one may say, if we have these three, it would then follow that all who hear would be saved. That would seem to follow what we have said were it not for the fact that men have the power, though they are dead in sin, to resist the Holy Spirit. The apostle said, "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost as your fathers did." The Lord Jesus had unbounded faith in the power of God. He preached the Word

of God in all its purity, He had the Spirit without measure, and yet many of those to whom He preached were not saved, and He rolls the blame over upon themselves, represents them as stopping their ears, shutting their eyes, hardening their hearts, and stiffening their necks against the truth, lest they might be converted and be healed. God has given this power to men, since He has made them free agents, and with power there always comes great responsibility. You have heard the story of the Irishman who was looking at Niagara Falls and some one said to him, "Isn't that wonderful?" but he replied, "There is nothing wonderful about it, the water goes over because there is nothing to hinder it." Well, that was true, but if you follow the stream down to what is called the whirl-pool you will there see that the rocks stand out and resist the current, and then when the river is resisted it turns and flows in another direction into the lake. So, the Spirit of God and the Gospel went out from Jerusalem as a river—God intending that it should flow through Judea and Samaria, and on to the uttermost parts of the earth, but the Jewish people resisted the truth, and the apostle said, "Lo, we turn to the Gentiles." And while that land is in darkness to-day, many of the nations that were then in darkness are now rejoicing in the truth and power of God. All through the

Scripture we have exhortation after exhortation not to grieve or quench the Spirit of God.

Without the three essentials we have been speaking of, Christian work cannot be accomplished. That is a great truth for Christians to ponder. In this land where we have men and women teaching the Word of God, accompanied by the power of the Spirit, it is a solemn thought for those who are unsaved, that if they are out of the Kingdom it is because they have resisted the Holy Spirit, who has been striving with them at different times and in many ways. With great power come the words from the Old Testament, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man."

We read, that when the spirit breathed upon these slain they stood on their feet an exceeding great army. Frequently, in Scripture, Christians are spoken of as soldiers, and the church as an army—clear as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army with banners. There is no sight grander upon earth than the review of a great army, when they are all in step, obeying the commands of the superior officer; and an army is organized for the purpose of retaining territory already gained, and for the purpose of taking new territory. The church of Christ has been organized for the purpose of retaining that which she is in possession of—the Sabbath, the sanctuary and the

Bible, but also for the purpose of conquering all the earth in the name of Christ. To the disciples and to the church through the disciples, He gave the great commision to go into all the world and to preach the Gospel to every creature, to make disciples in all nations, and so long as there is a soul without a knowledge of the truth the church has not accomplished her great mission. Nothing is more to be feared in an army than mutiny or disobedience. If one regiment begins to fire into another regiment, or one regiment tries to make recruits from another regiment, the army is made weak instead of strong. This is what the church has often done. One denomination firing into another denomination, and one sect trying to get recruits from another. The jealousies and the bickerings have often made the church powerless. That is the reason why so much of the world to-day lies under the Evil One, destitute of the Gospel, never having heard the name of Christ. It is not necessary to have organic union among Christians any more than it is necessary to have all the army in one regiment, but it is essential to have unity of purpose and unity in spirit, and this can only be had when Christians come to realize that no matter what denomination they belong to they are fighting a common foe, and they are under a common flag. In the late war between the United States and Spain, we

frequently heard it said that in the States there was no North and no South, that all were united together in a common cause against a common foe.

The last prayer that our Saviour offered up on behalf of His church was that they might be one, that the world might know that the Father had sent Him. And if the church of Jesus Christ was united together as a great army, having her different regiments and different companies, but having one aim, obeying one sovereign, in a short time the strongholds of evil would be overthrown and the banner of the cross unfurled in every land. But this can only be accomplished by a regenerate church, having in her the life of God.

XII.

THE TWO SONS.

"A certain man had two Sons."—LUKE 15: 11.

These two sons represent all humanity—the proud sinners and the penitent sinners, for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. Primarily, when the parable was uttered, they may have represented the publicans and the self-righteous Pharisees, but wherever we have those who have come to see their sins and are turning from them to God, we have a class represented by the younger son, and where we find those who pride themselves on their negative righteousness and despise others, we have the class represented by the elder brother. Let us follow the young man in his wanderings. First of all he wishes to get rid of the restraints of home, and to enjoy that which he calls, or looks upon, as liberty. There are many to-day, who refuse to become Christians, because they think that by so doing they would sacrifice what they consider freedom, and enter into a life of restraint, and, in a certain sense, bondage. There is one great fact, however, which is overlooked by some people, and was certainly overlooked by the young man—that one cannot have true liberty with-

out a certain amount of restraint. Look at the kite, for example, it is high up in the air, if it could speak to us it would no doubt make the statement that the cord was restraining it and keeping it from ascending heavenward, while we know that it is the cord which keeps it up, for as soon as it is able to break the cord, or get away from what it may consider the restraining power, instead of soaring like the eagle toward the sun, it comes down head first to the earth. So it was with this young man. He got free from the restraints of home, but we next see him in the swineherd. In the father's house he had the liberty of a son, in the swineherd he has to take the place of the humblest servant, and he is deprived of all liberty.

Thus it is with the sinner. Sin enslaves. When this young man manifested the desire to get away from home the father did not compel him to remain, because his house was a home and not a prison. There were no iron doors or brass fetters to retain the children, because they had liberty since they were sons. It is so in the household of faith—there are no slaves there, they are spoken of as sons, enjoying liberty, for the Lord deals with men as a father deals with his children. The devil is the great slave-driver, leading men captive at his will; but Christ is the emancipator and his followers have liberty.

After the younger son left home he probably had

what he considered a good time. So long as the money lasted his companions remained with him to drink his health, and sing his praises, but so soon as the money was gone they were not to be found. When the famine arose and he began to be in want he found himself alone. What a picture this is of life. Let no one say that there are no pleasures in sin. This is not the teaching of scripture. Moses, we are told, refused the pleasures of sin for a season, indicating that there were pleasures, but that they were short-lived. No doubt to many of us there is pleasure in the wine-cup, when it giveth its colour and moveth itself aright, but then there is the bite of the serpent, and the sting of the adder, the wounds without cause, and the misery which follows. While men are in the enjoyment of health they may have much pleasure in sin, but as soon as desire begins to fail, and disease lays hold of the body, then the pleasure is gone. The past is like a nightmare, the future is dark, and there are cravings that cannot be satisfied, like the fire that cannot be quenched.

He joined himself to a citizen, but he did not become a citizen; he was sent out into the fields to do that which every Jew hated, to care for and feed the animals that were not clean. He felt the pangs of hunger and the disgrace of the position—he was not only in want, but in misery. Imagine if you can

a man coming to him when he is in that condition, and the young man informing the stranger that his father has a beautiful home, that all of his servants have enough and to spare, and there is an abundance in that house. The stranger would look at him and would no doubt say, "If your statements are true, then I must come to one of two conclusions, either that your father is a hard-hearted and a cruel man, since he has an abundance and you starving in this miserable place, or else, if your father is large-hearted, loving and generous, and it is not his fault that you are here, then you must be beside yourself, and are playing the part of a fool." And to such a statement the young man would make answer, "The latter conclusion is the true one." Then he came to his senses, thought of his father's house, looked at the present state of affairs, and made the resolution that he would go home. When men continue in sin and in misery, for the way of the transgressor is hard, after they are told about the love of God and the grace of Christ, what conclusion can we come to but that they are insane, or blinded by the god of this world, when they are suffering and in misery, while God is as anxious to receive and satisfy all their wants as was the father of that wayward son , who was suffering in the far country? We have him now making the resolution,—and a resolution is all right if it is a

good one and if it is carried out—that he will return. The devil would not object to such a resolution on the part of any one so long as it was only a resolution. I can imagine the devil coming to this young man or to the sinner, of whom he is a type, and saying, "You have made up your mind that you will get out of this miserable place and return to your father's house, that is all right, but there is no need of being in a hurry, you haven't settled upon any definite time as to the carrying out of this resolution, be sure to go but not now—some future time." That is the way the Evil One talks to men in these days. There are thousands of people who have made up their minds that they will become Christians, but they have not settled upon the time that they will make a start. They will say, "Yes, but not to-night." The important thing is the fixing of the date, and this young man never would have left the swineherd had he not fixed upon a definite time, in which to carry out the resolution he made. There are people in Ireland who have been coming out to America ever since I was a boy, and they are in Ireland yet and are likely to die there. They are always talking about America and saying that they are coming out, but they have never fixed a date, they have never made a start, and as long as their feet remain on Irish soil, they can never set them on American soil. So it is with

sinners. There are men who have been talking about deciding for Christ for the last ten or twenty years, and they are as far away from Him to-day as when they began to talk about the matter, because they have never fixed upon a definite time. There is one thing about the devil—he is very indefinite. But the Holy Spirit is very definite, for He says, "To-day," "now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation."

This young man did not wait for any change of raiment, but having made the resolution he started. He said "I will arise and go to my father," and he arose and went. That was the turning point. With fear and trembling, it may be, he started toward home, but the father was watching for his return and saw him afar off. Then comes the beautiful picture of their meeting, the father throwing his arms around the neck of the son, the son acknowledging his sins. the rags removed, the ring put upon the hand and the shoes upon the feet, and there is great joy and gladness in the home on that day. Two things the young man brings with him,—his rags, which are a picture of our sins, and the words, with which he confesses the sins of the past. Hosea said, "Return unto the Lord and take with you words." The only two things we can take to God are our sins and the words confessing the past, entreating His forgiveness.

and casting ourselves upon His mercy. If this parable means anything, it means that God will receive the returning prodigal, with joy and with gladness; giving us not the servant's humble place, but all the rights and privileges of a son as we see it in this narrative. What joy thrilled the heart of every servant in the great household, when they saw the gladness in the father's face, because the long-lost son was found and restored to the home. And in like manner we are told that there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth, and joy in the Father's heart.

Then we have another picture brought before us. A servant who is full of gladness, rushes out towards the fields and he meets the elder brother. This brother has heard the music and the shouts of gladness and his countenance is like a thunder-cloud, for he is full of anger. He asks what all this means. When informed that his brother has returned he says, "I have no brother, I don't own or acknowledge that one who has wasted his substance in riotous living as my brother at all," and he was angry. And then the father went out and entreated him, reasoned with him, pleaded with him to come in to the feast of rejoicing, but he would not, and found fault with the father for what he has done in receiving this younger son. What a picture this is of the treatment which Christ

received from the Pharisees. At the very beginning of this chapter they murmured saying, "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them," just as the elder brother murmured because his father had received back the penitent brother. While this young man was far away from the father in a foreign land, the heart of the elder brother was still further away, for his was a heart of stone, void of love. And are there not in the church, the visible church, to-day, many like the elder brother? As he performed his duties mechanically and without a particle of love, so there are those who observe all the outward forms and ceremonies, who have just as much love for the outcast and the sinful, as this man had for his brother when he had wasted his substance in riotous living; and they have just as much love for God as this man had for his father. The apostle tells us that no matter what we have if we are without love we are as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. Christ uttered this and the other parables to justify His conduct in receiving sinners, and tried to show to those who were listening to Him that it was just as natural and as reasonable, that He should receive the penitent publicans as that the shepherd should go for the lost sheep, or the woman seek for the lost coin, or the father receive back the lost son. It also explains to us the reason why the publicans and sinners were

to enter the kingdom before those men who were morally and outwardly righteous, for this younger brother who had squandered his father's substance was rejoicing in the father's house, while the elder brother who had lived a respectable life was outside of that banqueting hall. Christ said that they should come from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of God, while the children of the kingdom would be cast out. But whose fault was it? Was it the fault of the father? He merely received the returning prodigal, but he entreated the elder brother to come in. Jesus Christ came not only to save the publicans and sinners, but also to save the self-righteous Pharisees, for He was the Saviour of all, just as the man in the parable was the father of these two sons.

There is no class so hard to reach and so hopeless as those who are priding themselves on their respectability, and on the fact that they have complied with all the outward forms and ceremonies. They have a negative righteousness, not having done the things for which they condemn others. This is brought out clearly in the case of the elder brother, and of the Pharisees, of which he is a type. Perhaps there is no other place in all scripture, in which the love of God is more manifest than in this fifteenth chapter

of Luke, for here we get an idea of what abundant forgiveness means. The father says nothing to the younger son about the past, it is all blotted out, and God says He will remember our iniquities no more, and our sins He will cast behind His back. What an emphasis this gives to the exhortation of the prophet, "Return unto the Lord and He will abundantly pardon."

Come let us to the Lord our God,
With contrite hearts return,
Our God is gracious nor will leave
The desolate to mourn.

XIII.

THE UNFORTUNATE MAN.

"Who is my neighbor?"—LUKE 10: 29.

"Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves?"—LUKE 10: 36.

We have here two questions. The first is put by the young ruler to Jesus, and the second is put to the young ruler by Jesus. When Jesus was only twelve years of age He astonished the doctors of the law by the questions which He asked, and by the answers which He gave to the questions they asked, and all through His ministry we find that He answered questions according to the motives which prompted them. If men questioned Him in order to entrap Him He answered them accordingly. If their questions came from mere curiosity, He tried to turn their thoughts to practical subjects. But if the questions were put for the sake of gaining information concerning the kingdom, He opened its treasure-house to those who were true seekers. In the case before us the young man asked the question in order to justify himself, and Jesus, by His answer and by His question, condemned the young lawyer, and showed him that his life had not been what he thought it was.

Let us look at the characters represented in this parable. First of all we have the young ruler who was trying to justify himself,—and he has had many successors during the centuries since he lived. Men are continually asking questions about different things, different kinds of amusement which may be questionable, but their questions very frequently are asked not for the sake of gaining information, but for the sake of justifying themselves concerning the things of which they speak. It is so much better when God justifies a man, for then there are none who can condemn since there is no higher authority.

Second, we have the robbers who come before us. They represent men who wish to get money without giving a fair equivalent either in time or value. It is probable they would not have waylaid this poor man had he willingly delivered to them all his possessions, but their hearts were so set upon getting what he had, that they were willing to wound, and would have gone so far as to kill, in order that they might obtain his money. Gambling is one kind of robbery, because no equivalent is given for the money obtained. Extortioners are robbers, and also men who take advantage of their fellowmen, and in times of difficulty obtain from them their property at a fraction of its value. But there are other kinds of robbery. Money may be restored and physical

wounds healed, but when a man is robbed of his character that is something which is hard to get back; and how often this is done. Men will blacken and slander others at election times in order to help themselves or their own party. You may call it blackmail or libel or whatever you like, but the men who practice it are descendants of the robbers, who waylaid the poor fellow between Jerusalem and Jericho.

The next one who comes on the scene is what we call the unfortunate man. He is not to blame for falling among the thieves or for being robbed, this was something that happened to him that he could not help. It may be that he did not take proper precautions when starting out on his journey, but nothing is said about that in the narrative. No doubt many men went from one city to the other without being molested, but he was waylaid; they are not to be praised for escaping, and he is not to be blamed for what happened to him. He represents a great many in the world to-day. Two young men come from the same village into the same city. One of them is met at the station by a man who takes him to a boarding-house, where he is surrounded by the ungodly and the sinners. He is taken or persuaded to go to some place of questionable amusement, is induced to do a little gambling just for pastime, to

take a little wine in order to be social, and so goes on from step to step until he becomes degraded, and is robbed of his manhood. The other young man finds his way into a Christian boarding-house, is surrounded from the first by a healthy influence, taken, it may be, to the Young Men's Christian Association, or to the young people's meeting in a church, becomes interested in spiritual things, becomes a leader among men, respected and looked up to by those who come in contact with him. Such things are happening in our cities every day, and there is no two ways, but many of those who are now outcasts of society are there because they fell among the robbers—those who stole from them their manhood or womanhood. How are we to treat such? There are only two ways in which we can treat them when they are down and helpless.

And that brings before us the representatives of another class of people, namely, the priest and the Levite. They were not robbers, they would not hurt or molest anybody, they were respectable, priding themselves on their moral characters and on the high positions which they held. They are not blamed for doing any wrong, but when they saw this poor unfortunate they looked at him, it may be they despised him, because of that which happened to him, or it may be they had a kind of pity for him; but we are

told in the narrative that they looked at him and passed by on the other side. He was neither better or worse, because they lived. Now, while there are not a great many robbers in the world there is a tremendous multitude even of professing Christians, who are the descendants of the Priest and the Levite. They pride themselves on their negative righteousness, and forget that men are condemned for lack of positive righteouness. When the Lord said to Israel through Moses, "Be sure your sin will find you out," it had reference to the part the two and a half tribes were to take in helping their brethren to conquer the land of Canaan. Moses told them that they were to go up and help their brethren, and said that if they failed to do so they might be sure that their sin would find them out. And in after years when the angel of the Lord said, "Curse ye, curse ye Meroz," it was not because of the iniquity these people had committed, but because they refused to come to the help of the Lord against the mighty. And when the Lord Jesus, in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, represents Himself as sitting on the judgment throne, He condemns the nations for what they have not done,—"Inasmuch as ye did it not unto them ye did it not unto Me." Also one of the New Testament writers tells us that to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin. There are so many in

the world to-day like this poor fellow who fell among the thieves, and thousands of those who call themselves by the name of Christ, are passing by and leaving them in their misery. The sin of doing nothing, or comparatively nothing, is the great sin of the church.

In bold relief to this dark background there comes upon the scene the good Samaritan. He sees the man, has compassion upon him and goes to work in the most practical manner to render all the assistance within his power, regardless of consequences. It is not a hard matter for us to find out to which of these classes we belong, for they all have their representatives in this nineteenth century.

I wish now to give the story another turn, and to see in the Samaritan a picture of Christ, and in this wounded man a picture of suffering humanity. It is surely legitimate to look at the parable from this point of view, since all will admit that Christ has done more for humanity, than the Samaritan did for the unfortunate man whom he helped. We are all agreed that the race has suffered more from the great robber, the father of all robbers, who took from them their original righteousness, and left them spiritually dead, and in a deplorable condition in the garden of Eden, than did this man from those who injured him. This wounded man in the parable could not

seek aid or help himself, but the Samaritan came to him. And when we were without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly, He came to us. We have not to descend to the heavens to bring Him down, or to the depths to bring Him again from the dead, for He is nigh unto us. He left His throne of glory and came down to sojourn upon earth in such a way that He is not far from any man. The Samaritan not only came to where the poor unfortunate man was, but he took hold of him just as he was, and Christ has not only come to us but He takes us just as we are. As the Samaritan did not ask this man to wash his wounds and to partially heal himself, so Christ does not ask us to try to cleanse ourselves from sin, and become good, and then He will receive us. Even His enemies said, "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." A patient never thinks of trying to become better before he will send for the physician, but he will send for the doctor in order that he may be restored to health. Yet men are continually talking about turning over a new leaf, and trying to reform their lives, and then coming to Christ,—trying to sew the old cloth to the new garment,—but Christ wants to take us just as we are in our sins, and to do for us spiritually what the Samaritan did for this man physically. There is an institution in old London where the workers go out

into the lanes and by-ways of the city, and get hold of the little waifs, with their tattered garments, dirty faces, and matted hair; they bring them to their home, and take their picture; then they go to work to cleanse, clothe, educate, and give them a trade, and when they are leaving they take their picture again, and present them with the first and last, saying, "This is what you were when we found you, this what you are when you are leaving us." Some thought such as this may have been in the mind of the apostle when he said, in speaking of the iniquity in which men were steeped, "And such were some of you, but now ye are cleansed, ye are justified."

Again, this poor wounded man had no claim upon the Samaritan. The probability is he was a Jew and the Jews hated and despised the Samaritans, hence, he had no claim upon his benefactor. In like manner the sinner has no claim upon Christ. It may be that he has blasphemed that holy name, and done and said many things against Jesus. The apostle Paul realized this, and he was continually speaking about the grace of the Lord Jesus, the unmerited favor of the One who saved the persecutor. Still further, the Samaritan did not expect to receive a reward for what he was doing, neither did Jesus save us on account of anything He expected to receive from us. By the word of His power He could call into exis-

tence multitudes of beings superior to us. But while the Samaritan did not perform this act of kindness and self-denial for the sake of reward, yet he was rewarded in the satisfaction which came to him, and in the gratitude which he received from the one he helped. So it is with our blessed Master, He sees of the travail of His soul and is satisfied, and to Him there is a joy which comes from bringing sons into glory. We can understand this because it is impossible for us to injure a person without suffering ourselves; and it is just as impossible to help others without being blessed ourselves; and we read that there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth—joy like that which was in the shepherd's heart when he found the sheep that was lost.

Now what did this wounded man do in order to be saved? He simply did nothing but let the Samaritan do it all. What have we to do in order to be saved from our wounds and sins? Simply to submit ourselves to Christ, to stand still and see His salvation, to let Him do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. In Paul's day, when he was praying for Israel, he said that the reason why they were not saved was because they were trying to save themselves by working out a righteousness, and they had not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of

God. One reason why so many who have heard the gospel story are at the present time unsaved is because they are trying to do the Lord's work,—for salvation is of the Lord. Not by our efforts, lest we should boast, but by grace are we saved, through faith. The wounded man showed faith in the Samaritan when he submitted himself to him, and if we have enough faith in Christ to submit ourselves to Him we shall be saved. Suppose this wounded man had said to his benefactor, "There is no use in you trying to help me because the robbers may find me again," he would have answered, "Why, I will stand between you and all danger if you trust me." Commonly we hear men say, "Christ may save us, but we are afraid that we will go back again, that we will not be able to hold out afterwards, that the devil will take possession of us once more." Paul never had any such thoughts, for he said, "I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to His trust against that day." Let us remember that when we commit ourselves to Christ He takes charge of us, comes between us and all danger, for He is not only able to save to the uttermost, but He is able to keep us from falling, and at last to present us faultless. Then the Samaritan made provision for the wounded man, not only so, but became responsible for the man's wants; he gave two pence and said,

"Whatever more is necessary I will pay thee when I come again." Have we not the promise in scripture that God will supply all our wants out of His riches in glory, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord? He saves us from the sins of the past, His grace is sufficient for us in the present, as our days so will our strength be. He has also made the future sure, neither death nor life, things present nor things to come, height nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

XIV.

MANASSEH.

"Manasseh his son reigned in his stead."—II. CHRONICLES 32 : 33.

Manasseh was the son of his grandfather. Old Ahaz was one of the worst of kings, and his mantle of iniquity seemed to skip a generation to fall upon the head of young Manasseh. Hezekiah, his father according to the flesh, was one of the best kings, and after he had been requested to put his house in order, as he was to die, he had fifteen years added to his life. Three years after that Manasseh was born. For twelve years he had the loving care of the godly Hezekiah and the healthful influence of that home where God was reverenced and feared. It is a great advantage for a boy to grow up surrounded by such a spiritual and healthful atmosphere. We cannot overestimate the influence and power of a Christian home. But in the case of Manasseh, as in the case of so many others, there must have been an outside influence counteracting the influence of the home. When he was twelve years of age he was left alone, and began to rule in Jerusalem. At that age, when a boy thinks he knows everything, and could even teach his father, no doubt he was surrounded by many who would flat-

ter him and exhort him not to follow the antiquated ideas of his fathers, but to strike out for himself, and so we have him entering upon a course the very opposite of that which his father pursued. He breaks down the altars which his father built, and he builds up the high places and the altars to Baal, which his father pulled down.

How often since then this history has repeated itself. How frequently we find young men undoing what their fathers did, squandering the money that their fathers gathered, blaspheming the God that their fathers worshipped, running riot and making shipwreck of their souls. The prophets spoke to him but he hearkened not. He looked with disdain upon the messengers of the Lord, and refused to hearken to their voice, turned his feet away from the sanctuary, and not only mocked but persecuted those who opposed his views or reproved him for his actions. How many there are to-day following in his footsteps. First, they have been among the ungodly desecrating the Sabbath and forsaking the sanctuary, then we find them standing in the way of sinners, and when they have reached the last stage we see them sitting in the seat of the scornful and mocking at everything that is sacred.

But while he is an unbeliever in the established truths of the religion of his country, he is one of the

most credulous of men for he believes in wizards and witchcraft, and all the enchantments of his day. We so frequently find men who cannot believe, or say they cannot believe, in facts that have been established by many infallible proofs, believing at the same time in the greatest absurdities.

Not only was Manasseh bad himself and opposed to all righteousness, but he led others astray. The higher the position is which a man occupies the greater his influence either for good or evil. When he is going down in sin he is like a great vessel when she is sinking, drawing after her the smaller boats which may surround her. There is a woe pronounced upon the sinner, but a greater woe on those who lead others astray. And this Manasseh did on an extensive scale. When he would not hearken to the messengers of the Lord he was compelled to listen to the voice of His judgments. For the captains and the host of the king of Assyria came against him. He fled and hid himself in the thorns, but he was ferreted out, bound with fetters, carried as a captive to Babylon, and put into one of their prisons or dungeons. We can imagine his feelings the first night he spent in that prison-house, when we remember the kind of those prisons, their gloominess and the miserable condition in which they were kept, and remember also that he was not only a king but had been

brought up from his childhood in a royal palace, having everything which his heart desired, and never knowing what it was to have his liberty curtailed. When he is left alone in the silence of the night he cannot help thinking about scenes of the past; he will be back again to the days of childhood, feel upon his head the pressure of a loving hand and hear a voice saying, "The Lord bless thee and keep thee." Then his sins and his iniquities will rise before him as great mountains, he will see the innocent blood that he had shed, he will hear its cry from the ground calling for vengeance, his whole past comes before him, and from it he cannot escape.

Memory is an awful thing, or it is a glorious thing. It is either the worm that never dies and the fire that cannot be quenched, or that which brings salvation. If we remember, when it is too late, we are like the one to whom Abraham said, "Son, remember in thy life-time thou hadst thy good things." If memory comes to us in time it is like that which saved the psalmist when he said, "I thought upon my ways and turned my feet unto Thy testimonies." Memory was the salvation of Manasseh, for out of the black darkness of his past terrible life he heard a voice saying, "Come now, and let us reason together, though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson they shall

be as wool." "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God for He will abundantly pardon." There is no doubt but he heard such a voice, and it was that which gave him courage to call upon the Lord in the night of his trouble and from the dungeon in which he was imprisoned; and that God, whose mercy has in it a wideness like the wideness of the sea, heard the cry of this sinful and suffering king and came to his rescue.

How many there are in the world to-day with whom God has been dealing in this manner. They have refused to listen to His word, have turned aside from His commandments; but sickness or difficulty or distress of some kind has taken hold of them and then in the hour of their distress they have cried unto the Lord, and He has harkened to their voice and come to their deliverance. And then they can say, as one of old, It was well for us that we were afflicted, for before affliction we went astray.

No doubt a great light came into the soul of Manasseh on that never-to-be-forgotten night. In the morning he heard the footsteps of the guard approaching his cell, and to his amazement he was informed that he was set at liberty. God gave to him abundantly above all that he had either asked or ex-

pected to receive. He returned to Jerusalem freed from the bondage of the sins of his past life, freed from the bondage of the Assyrians, his heart full of gratitude to the God of his fathers, and at the same time full of sorrow for the sins he had committed. Like Paul, when he thought of the grace of God that saved him, he was lifted into the third heavens, but when he remembered that at one time he had persecuted the church of Christ and consented to the death of the first martyr, he was filled with sorrow and looked upon himself as the chief of sinners. Such feelings must have been in the heart of Manasseh as he returned to his city and his throne.

When men repent they may pull out the nails which they have driven in during the days of sin, but they cannot get rid of the nail-holes. How often he would say to himself, "If I had only hearkened to the voice of the Lord and obeyed the counsel of my father, how different the kingdom would have been." He cannot undo the evil he had done, but he is determined that he will redeem the time as far as it lies within his power; and so he brings forth fruits meet for repentance by pulling down the high places and the altars of Baal, which he had builded up, and by building up the altars to Jehovah which he had pulled down.

The prophets and men of God, who had come out

of their hiding-places when the king was taken captive at Babylon, now hear with dismay and terror that he is coming back again to Jerusalem, and they are escaping for their lives when a messenger comes to them and says, "I have seen strange things to-day, I have seen Manasseh pulling down an altar that he erected to Baal, I have seen him build an altar to Jehovah, I have heard him cry to the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob," and those who listen to the messenger shout "Hallelujah, the king has repented." What a thrill of joy must have gone through their hearts, what a change came over the city and the community.

How often scenes similar to that are witnessed even in our own time. For the God who saved Manasseh is our God. Perhaps this king was the greatest sinner in the Old Testament dispensation. It is said that by his orders Isaiah was sawn asunder, and the inspired writer informs us that he made the people of Jerusalem do worse than the heathen. Now, if God saved that man, made him a worker of righteousness and a worshipper of the living God, is there anything too hard for Him? It is this line of argument that the apostle Paul uses in the New Testament, informing us that Christ saved him, the chief, the greatest of sinners, saved him as an example of the power of His grace and the greatness of His

love. He is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto Him; but he is also able to bring the most hardened sinner to a sense of his guilt and of his danger. No doubt there were many in Jerusalem who knew that they could not influence Manasseh, but they poured out their hearts in prayer to the God who can turn the hearts of kings as He turns the rivers of water. And so in our midst there may be sinners—high-handed, proud, cruel, and scornful as this king of Jerusalem; but the God of heaven is able to bring them to their knees, to bring their sins before them so that they will shudder at the sight, and then to reveal unto them the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world. The story of Manasseh should keep the greatest sinner from despairing, and should encourage Christians to pray for the conversion of those who are far from God and out of the way, for He is able to make the most hardened become the most truly penitent and His most devoted servants.

XV.

THREE NEW TESTAMENT CONVERSIONS.

"This day is salvation come to this house."—LUKE 19 : 9.
"Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"—ACTS 9 : 6.
"What must I do to be saved?"—ACTS 16 : 30.

First, Zaccheus. The account of his conversion is given in the gospel by Luke, chapter 19: 1-11. He was not only a publican but a chief among them, consequently he would be one of the most despised men in Israel, for the publicans were looked down upon on account of the positions they held as tax-gatherers, under the Roman government. He became interested in Christ because he had heard that Jesus was not only friendly to the class to which he belonged but that He had received them, had eaten with them, and had called one of them to the rank of discipleship. He was very anxious to see this new teacher, but there were two difficulties in the way—he was little of stature and could not see over a crowd, and then he knew he was thoroughly hated by the multitudes, who would gather around Jesus, on His way to Jerusalem; and a small man has a very poor chance in an unfriendly crowd. But Zaccheus was one of those men who is not easily turned from the goal

he desires to reach. When he made up his mind to do a thing he generally did it. The same energy and perseverance that made him chief of the publicans is now brought into play in order to accomplish his object. The Lord likes to meet such men, men who put their whole heart and soul into whatever they are doing or trying to do, for they are among the violent who take the kingdom of heaven by force. It is said that necessity is the mother of invention, and seeing Jesus had become to Zaccheus a necessity, he devised a means by which he would have his desires gratified. He climbed up into a tree thinking, it may be, that he would see Jesus without attracting any attention from those who were passing by. But what must his thoughts have been when Jesus looked up, and when the eyes of the two men for the first time met; what a thrill of joy and fear must have rushed through his heart, when he heard his own name spoken by this One whom he was so desirous of seeing; and then amazement reached its climax when Jesus told him to make haste and come down as He was to abide at his house that day. He did not invite Jesus to his home, but Jesus invited Himself. As a general thing He went where He was asked, even to their feasts, but here He is inviting Himself. In one of the parables which our Lord uttered we have the servants going out to one class of the community and inviting

them; we have them sent out to another class and they are commanded to compel these to come in. Zaccheus, in a certain sense, belonged to the latter class; he would never have invited Jesus, not because he was unwilling to have Him, but because he felt himself unworthy of such an honour. Jesus, who could read the thoughts and search the hearts of men, knew this, and He knew that He would be more than welcome in the home of this publican. What a night that was to Zaccheus. Can we not imagine Jesus putting His hands on the heads of the little children and blessing them, and talking with them about the things of the kingdom? It was a night never to be forgotten by this publican and his family. And afterwards, when the news came from Jerusalem that the Jews with wicked hands had slain the Prophet of Nazareth, there was no home in which there was greater grief than this home of the publican; but how their hearts would rejoice when they heard the news that was almost too good to be true, that the crucified One had risen again from the dead. Zaccheus may have been among those who watched Christ ascend from the Mount of Olives; be that as it may, the impressions which were left upon his heart on that memorable occasion when he first met with Jesus, were never effaced.

We come now to the second conversion—that of

Saul, which is recorded in the ninth chapter of the Acts. He is so different from Zaccheus. There is no desire on his part to see Jesus, but all his powers are being put forth to exterminate those who believe in Christ. No man was doing more against the cause of Christianity than this man of Tarsus. No doubt the Christian people prayed for his conversion; but how was it to be brought about? They could not speak to him or reason with him, there was no human instrumentality that could be brought to bear upon this persecutor, and his conversion, from a human point of view at least, seemed impossible. But when ordinary means are not sufficient to reach the sinner God is able to use extraordinary means, and so in the case of this man we find Christ Himself appearing to Saul when he was on his way to Damascus. The light that shone around him was brighter than the sun at mid-day, and the voice that he heard brought terror to his heart and he fell as dead upon the ground. And this is the man who subsequently speaks so much about the sovereignity of God and the grace of God. Perhaps in no case God's sovereignity and God's grace were more marvellously displayed than in the conversion of this man. Saul the persecutor, by the sovereign power of Christ, turned to be the earnest apostle; the one who was the chief of sinners saved by the grace of God. In after years he

thinks of this scene with amazement, and could see in it the great truth that God can make the wrath of man to praise Him. In a statement which he makes afterwards he wishes to correct the great mistake which he, himself, made. He heard all that could be said against Christ and Christianity, but he listened not to the testimony in favor of Christ and Christianity. Therefore he gives the exhortation, "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good." There is one point in connection with his conversion, however, that is worthy of special note,—the very moment that he was convinced of the divinity of Jesus Christ that moment he became His servant and cried out, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" and from that hour he loved to call himself the slave of Jesus Christ. How many there are in the world today who tell us that they believe the scriptures, they believe that Jesus Christ is divine, able and willing to save them, believe that they ought to be Christians and yet they have not taken the first step. Will these facts not rise in judgment against them? for the one who knows his Lord's will and does it not shall be beaten with many stripes. The moment that Saul came to know the Lord that moment he surrendered himself, body, soul, and spirit to Jesus Christ, and in after years he could say, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

Now we come to a man who is very different from either Zaccheus or Saul—one who occupies a very different position. He is a Roman soldier, turnkey in the prison in Phillippi, and the account of his conversion is given in the sixteenth chapter of the Acts. How is he to be reached—he and his companions and the prisoners? They do not know very much about this sect that is spoken against, they have not an opportunity, and perhaps if they had they would have no desire to go to the meetings where Paul and Silas were preaching, yet it is God's will that the gospel should come into the prison-house. How does He bring it about? We have the story of the conversion of Lydia and then the account of Paul's arrest because he had healed the maiden who was bringing in money to her proprietors, who, when they saw that their gain was gone, caused the apostle to be thrown into the prison-house. After he had been flogged the jailer received a charge to keep him safely, and so he made his feet fast in the stocks, and put him in the inner prison. Paul knew that for some purpose God permitted all this; he knew that it was the Lord's will that he should come to Macedonia, and that in some way God was working out his own plans; that is what enabled him to sing, he and his companion, in the prison; for, as he tells us afterwards, he was willing that the cause of his Master might be advanced by

his bonds; if being in prison was to further the cause then he wished to be in prison, for the sole desire of his life was to advance the cause of the One to whom he had given himself. The other prisoners hear the singing—to them it is a strange sound, then the prison is shaken, the jailer wakes up thinking the prisoners are gone, and tries to take away his own life to save himself from the disgrace which would come upon him on the morrow, when he would be brought before the Roman governor and perhaps put to death for allowing the prisoners to escape. But the hand that is drawing the sword is stayed by Paul. Conviction comes to the heart of the trembling jailer, who asks the great question, "What must I do to be saved?" He receives the memorable answer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," and the same hour of the night we find him rejoicing in the faith and ministering to these prisoners.

Looking at these three men who were brought into the kingdom we see how different were the positions which they occupied, and how different were the means used in bringing them to a knowledge of the truth, yet they are all brought into the fold through the one Mediator. It was Jesus who changed the heart of Zaccheus, it was Jesus who appeared to Saul, it was Jesus who was preached to the jailer,

and through faith in this Saviour these three men were saved and brought into the kingdom of God. While there are many points of contrast there are also points in which they resemble each other. In the case of the whole three their lives and their dispositions are completely changed by coming in contact with Christ. Zaccheus was an extortioner and no doubt a miser, for when a man is covetous he will often exact more than he should when an opportunity presents itself, and he will retain that which he should give to others. We have every reason to believe that before Zaccheus was converted he took the advantage of men and was also miserly, hoarding up that which he gathered; but as soon as he meets Christ, as soon as salvation comes to his house, and into his heart, the man is completely changed; he wishes now to restore four-fold to those he has robbed, and he is willing to give half his goods to feed the poor; he becomes just and righteous, he becomes generous and large-hearted; he is now in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature; old things have passed away and all things have become new. In the case of Saul the change is also marvellous. The persecutor becomes the apostle, the man who desired to have everyone slain because they would not think as he thought, and do as he wished them to do, is now willing to suffer imprisonment or death itself in order that his enemies

may be saved, for he tells us that his heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved, and that he could wish himself accursed for his brethren's sake; willing to endure the perils by land and sea; willing to fight with the beasts at Ephesus, or to die a martyr's death in order that the men who hate him might be saved from their sins and brought to a knowledge of the truth as it is in Christ. The cruel persecutor becomes the loving and gentle disciple, saying from his heart, "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity."

Then look at the jailer before his conversion. He was cruel, thrusting these men into the inner prison and putting their bleeding limbs into the stocks—heartless we would say. Not only so but he was cowardly, seeking to take away his own life rather than bear the consequences on the following day; for there is no man who will take away his life but is either insane or the greatest of cowards; for it is done for fear of the disgrace or the suffering which may come from his fellow-men. Now we have this combination of cruelty and cowardice, but after his conversion everything is reversed; he has become the kindest of men; with his own hands he is washing the stripes of the prisoners, ministering to their wants, and displaying great heroism for he is now caring for the men that he was told to keep fast. What

does he care now for the Roman court or the magistrate? The love of God has lifted him above the fear of man, and now, regardless of consequences, he is doing to these prisoners what his heart and his conscience tell him he should do. It is the grace of God and the love of God that make heroes of men—enables one to chase a thousand, and two to put ten thousand to flight. It was this grace and love that enabled Luther to say that he would go to Worms if there were as many devils there as there were tiles on the houses; and it was this grace that enabled John Knox to so live and act that it is said that he never feared the face of man.

In the three cases brought before us we have the fruits meet for repentance—we have lives manifesting the change that had taken place in the heart. And on down through the centuries wherever there has been a true conversion there has been a change of heart and consequently a change of life; for you cannot change the fountain without changing the stream; and if a man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His. But if his heart be changed it will be seen in the man's life and in his action, as it was seen in the life and the actions of Zaccheus, of Saul, and of the Phillippian jailer.

XVI.

THE GREAT FEAST.

"Come; for all things are now ready."—LUKE 14: 17.

We are all familiar with the circumstances which led Christ to speak this parable. He was at a feast in the house of one of the chief Pharisees, and He noticed that the guests did the very opposite to what people do when they go to prayer-meeting—they chose the front or chief seats. He advised them to take lower seats lest they might have to move when those for whom the chief places were reserved would arrive, and that it would look better to be taken up from a lower to a higher place than to be taken down from a higher to a lower. He then turned His attention to the host, for He noticed that all the people who were present were well to do, and from the best families, and He knew that this chief Pharisee expected to be invited to their homes when they would have feasts; so He advised the man when he would be making a feast again to invite the poor, and those who could not recompense him, so that he might gain the reward of heaven. Someone who had been watching all that was going on and listening to the conversation said, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the

kingdom of God." To show this one that men do not appreciate the kingdom of God as much as his remark would seem to indicate, our Lord spoke this parable of the great supper, and from it there are several important lessons which we can learn.

A feast is a place where we are expected to enjoy ourselves, to lay aside all care and anxiety and enter into the full enjoyment of the evening. So it is with Christianity; it is compared to a feast, not intended to bring sorrow and sadness into the homes and lives of those who embrace it, but to bring joy and gladness; and this is the idea that is so clearly brought out not only in the teachings of Christ, but in the teachings of His apostles in the New Testament. The early Christians were full of gladness and joy, and were the happiest people in every community where they dwelt.

Again, in this feast that is spoken of the host bore all expenses; those invited were not expected to contribute anything, simply to accept of the invitations and partake of his bounty which was so freely provided. So it is with salvation, all the cost has been borne by God. What must it have cost Him to give up the only begotten and well-beloved Son, for we read that He spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all? What must it have cost Christ to lay aside His glory, to endure the contradiction of

sinners, the sufferings of this life and the accursed death of the cross? All has been provided, for salvation is of the Lord, and all the sinner has to do is to accept of the invitation and take freely this that is offered to him. One would naturally think that men would be anxious to go to such a feast as is described in this chapter; but we learn to the contrary, when we see how the invitations were treated, for they all with one consent began to make excuse. They had no reasons to advance for not being present, but they manufactured excuses which they presented to the messengers, who brought the invitations. The first had a piece of land which he wished to see, another had some oxen he wished to prove, and the third had married a wife and therefore could not come. Looking at these we see they were merely excuses, the land was not rolling stock to have moved away, and the oxen could have been proven on another occasion as well as on that evening, and the wife of the man who was married was certainly invited, for a man and his wife are one except when travelling by rail or on steamboats, and these innovations were not known in those days. But the fact of the matter was they did not want to come, and the host saw through their excuses and then, being angered, he declared that they would not taste of his supper. This seems natural. If, for example, any

of us go to great expense providing for a banquet, tell our friends what we are doing, at the same time requesting them to keep certain dates open, and when everything is ready send them formal invitations, if they, knowing their presence was desired, instead of accepting the invitations, send us trifling excuses, not thinking it worth their while to come, after we have gone to the expense, we would naturally say, "They will come the next time they are invited." Therefore this host that is spoken of, when he knew that his invitations were made light of, and that these people did not appreciate and would not accept of his kindness, simply said that they would not taste of his supper. Now if we apply this as our Lord intended to apply it, we see that men make the same kind of excuses for not accepting the gospel invitations. And let it be borne in mind that the things which kept these people from that banquet were not wrong in themselves, and many of the things which keep people out of the kingdom are things that are not sinful in themselves. For example, it is not wrong for a man to own land or to buy it; it is not wrong for a man to buy oxen, for even in the Old Testament dispensation they were not among the unclean animals; it is not wrong for a man to get married, for we are told that it is not good for a man to be alone. All these things are lawful in them-

selves. And we see that in one case it may be the farm, in another the merchandise, in another the pleasure that is lawful; and these things are to-day keeping multitudes out of the kingdom of God. The man would not have had to part with his land, or his neighbor with the oxen, neither would the newly married couple have had to get a divorce in order to attend this banquet. And men to-day can have all these things and at the same time accept of the invitations of the gospel; if they will only let their light shine and bring their Christianity into their business and their pleasure. Multitudes have done this. Some of the most successful merchants in all ages have been the most devoted Christians, and many who are enjoying life to its fullest extent are also rejoicing in the assurance of the love of God and in fellowship with His people.

Now we have been invited; and when the Lord gives an invitation He means it. We can imagine people, in what is called society, sending invitations to those whose presence they do not desire, and the people who receive the invitations may know that their absence will be more acceptable than their presence at the party or ball to which they have been invited. But we cannot think of God acting in this way, for He does not mock men or use deception. When He invites people He invites them because He

wants them to come. These people to whom the Lord makes reference, knew that they were invited and that they were wanted, and the host knew that, hence, they are not urged, they have made their choice fully understanding the situation, and he decides accordingly. How true this was in the case of Israel at Kadesh-barnea. The Lord invited them to enter into the land of promise but they refused, and then He said: "Ye shall not enter." He closed the door against them. Do we not learn from that incident and from this parable, that when the Lord invites us we may refuse the invitation once too often? And He may say to us as He said to those men, "Thou shalt not taste of My supper or enter into My kingdom." And you will notice that they treated the messengers with courtesy and respect but refused very politely to accept of the invitation. How true that is of many to-day; how courteous and respectful they are to those who bring the message; but they fail to accept of it, present their miserable excuses and shut themselves out of the kingdom. But notice that while these men refused to go when asked, they did not defeat the plans of the host. He had made a feast and he was determined that it would be furnished with guests. In like manner, when men refuse the invitations of the gospel they shut themselves out, but they do not defeat the plans of God. Christ said to the

very men who were refusing His invitations that they would be shut out while men would come from the east and west, from the north and from the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God, for Christ shall yet see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied, no matter how we treat His message or His invitation. We see in the parable how this is to be brought about.

The servants are now told to go out into the cities, to the streets and to the lanes; then they are sent to the highways and to the hedges and commanded to compel men to come in. While they only invited one class, they are to compel this other class, and it is not hard to see the reason for this change in the orders to the messengers. The first class knew they were invited and were wanted and felt themselves, perhaps, worthy of the invitation; the latter class would look at it from a very different point of view because of their past lives. For example, suppose the Lord Mayor of some of our great cities would make a banquet inviting the nobility, if they would refuse to come and then he sent his messengers out into the slums of the great city inviting the poor and the despised to the feast, we can easily understand how they would look upon such an invitation. They would say to the messengers, "There must be a mistake somewhere, we have broken the very laws that the chief magistrate is supposed to enforce, we have de-

spised him and the government of his city, we are poor and miserable, it cannot be possible that he wants us at his banquet." What an amount of persuasion and reasoning would be necessary in order to compel such people to accept of such an invitation. Thus when we go to the sinners who have fallen and gone down, it may be, into the mire of iniquity, we present to them an invitation from the Lord of Hosts informing them that He is desirous that they should be His, that they should sit down in His banqueting-house, become sharers of His glory and heirs to a wonderful inheritance. They immediately respond by saying that the invitation cannot be for them since they have taken His name in vain, broken His laws, and sinned against Him in so many ways—they are unworthy. And what persuasion and entreaty and reasoning is necessary in order to show to them that they are the invited ones, and that He really wants them to share in His bounty. That is what the compelling means—the persuading of those who are unwilling to come because they realize their unworthiness and their unfitness, and cannot believe that the invitation is for them.

The work of the messengers then was to obey the command of their master, and compel these men from the streets and lanes, the highways and hedges, to come to the feast that it might be furnished with

guests. This is the work which Christ has entrusted to His church, and the question comes, Is the church doing this work — compelling these multitudes to come into the kingdom? Are we not sometimes repelling them by our magnificent buildings so gorgeously furnished, our classical music and philosophic essays? The Christianity of many of us consists in faring sumptuously every day, wearing fine apparel, taking in the best entertainments, attending divine service once a Sabbath, sitting in a beautifully cushioned pew and criticising the choir or quartette, making some wise remark about the sermon, and thanking God we are not like the masses, many of whom possess more brains than we do, but they have never had a chance of developing them, because they were born poor and have had to struggle all their life trying to make ends meet. How many of us could honestly say that we are among the messengers sent out to compel sinful men to come into the kingdom of God? Oh, church of the living God, wake up to your responsibilitiy, for your duty is to take the gospel to every creature and in Christ's stead to persuade men to come into His kingdom.

Am I talking to any who feel that because of their past lives the invitation does not include them? If so, I plead with you, by the love of the Father Who gave His only begotten Son to redeem you, by

the love of the Son Who emptied Himself of His divine glory, took upon Himself our nature, bearing our sins in His own body on the tree, and dying for us that we might have life through Him, by the love of the Holy Spirit who has been showing you your sins and striving with your heart, respond to the Lord's invitation and say, "I come."

Just as I am—without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee,
Oh Lamb of God, I come, I come.

XVII.

PRAYER.

"Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."—LUKE 11: 1.
"After this manner, therefore, pray ye."—MATTHEW 6: 9.

No man was so highly spoken of by our Lord as John the Baptist, and in reading the New Testament we are somewhat surprised that the writers give to him so little space. But enough is said to indicate his character and the line along which his preaching ran. And this question which the disciple asked our Lord reveals John to us not only as a man of prayer, but as one who taught his disciples to pray; and the disciples of Jesus are anxious that they might be taught by Him, as John's disciples were taught by their master. They do not wish to be taught concerning the necessity of prayer, for they had come to realize that prayer is as necessary to the life of the soul, as breathing is to the life of the body. Neither do they ask concerning the One to whom prayer should be offered, for all through their history they prayed to the God of heaven and their beloved Daniel refused to pray to any God save the God of his fathers, though he knew what the consequences

would be; and the Old Testament is full of prayers which went from the hearts of the people to the throne of God. But they wished to be taught to pray in such a manner that blessings and power might come down upon them and our Lord gave to them, and, through them, has given to us the model prayer which we sometimes speak of as the Lord's prayer.

If we were sending a petition to the Queen, about the first question which would present itself is, How shall we address her? what title shall we give her? And when we are sending our petitions to the Lord of all the earth, how shall we address Him? It is this question rising in our hearts that our Lord answers when He says, Say, Our Father. In the Old Testament God is frequently spoken of as a father, but always in the sense of the Creator or the Preserver or the Redeemer of His people; but in the New Testament the word has a different and a deeper meaning, a new relationship has been established; God the Son has taken upon Himself our nature. Forasmuch then as we are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself took part of the same, taking not the form of angels but the seed of Abraham, becoming bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh; and through faith we have received His divine nature, for to as many as received Him gave He power to become the sons of God, so that now we have received the adoption and

can cry, Abba Father. Since we are joint heirs with Jesus and He has become the elder brother, we can now speak of God as our Father in a different way from that in which the ancients understood the term, coming not as foreigners to a king and potentate, but coming as children to a living Father.

The second question which would present itself with reference to the petition of which we have been speaking is, Where shall we send it? And this question with reference to our Father is answered by Christ when he Says, "Which art in Heaven." When Solomon was dedicating the temple he said that the heaven and the heaven of heavens could not contain God, and we know from the scripture that God is in every place, and that it is impossible to get away from His Spirit or from His all-seeing eye; yet He has a dwelling-place, the place of His throne, the city that Abraham saw afar off, a house of many mansions to which our Saviour referred on the last night He was with the disciples, a house not made with hands, to which Paul makes reference when writing to the Corinthians—the dwelling-place of our God; and from all parts of the universe God the Father can be reached by the prayers of His children. A petition, if sent to royalty, will be to the point, with very few superfluous words, and on that account it will necessarily be brief. Prayer ought to be to the point, as we learn

from this model given to us, and it should be brief. This is certainly true in regard to public prayer, and there is no lesson which the church has taken so long to learn. How many meetings have been killed by long prayers; how many congregations have been wearied and put out of a devotional frame of mind because the minister seemed to think that he had to take in everything from the day that the morning stars sang together, until the angel with one foot on the land and the other upon the sea shall cry, "that there should be time no longer." We have no authority for these long prayers. The prayer at the dedication of the temple that was supposed to be an event in the history of the nation will take only five or six minutes to read, and in the New Testament long prayers are condemned, and we are told that men are not heard for their much speaking. Brevity then is one of the lessons which Christ teaches by this model which he has given to us. This does not apply, of course, to private devotion; men may spend the whole night in communion with Him as He frequently spent the whole night in communion with his Father.

The next question presenting itself is, What shall we ask? Here we have the answer,—Pray for the hallowing of the Father's name. Names in scripture were always significant, and the name of God stands for His attributes. We are to pray that that name,

which is so frequently blasphemed and taken in vain by His creatures may be hallowed and had in reverence, and then that His kingdom may come. If that kingdom had come there would be no need to offer up this prayer, but it has not. The kingdom referred to is not the kingdom of God which is within us, but the kingdom that shall stretch from shore to shore and from the river to the ends of the earth; the time when all nations shall become His inheritance and all the kingdoms of the world the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ; the time when all shall know Him and when there shall be nothing to hurt or to destroy in all His holy mountain, when He shall reign in righteousness ; and when that kingdom comes His name will be truly hallowed. Pray that His will may be done upon the earth. Our world is full of jarrings and discord because men are out of touch with God and consequently out of touch with one another. But when His kingdom shall come and His will be done upon earth as it is in heaven, there will be nothing but the sweetest harmony; and it is for this that the Christian is to pray. Our thoughts are now turned to ourselves—our physical necessities, our daily bread. Our Saviour, in speaking of the Gentiles, said that they were always thinking and talking about what they would eat and drink and wherewithal they would be clothed. He requested His disciples to seek first the

kingdom of God, stating that these necessary things would be added, since the Father knoweth that the children have need of them; therefore in this prayer He teaches to pray first for the kingdom of God and then to ask for the things which the Lord knoweth we need. It is right for us then to pray for our daily bread—for food and raiment, for the God who feeds the sparrows and clothes the lilies will surely care for, and supply the wants of those, who are his children.

The next petition has reference to our sins—for there is no man that sinneth not, and as John tells us, if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us, or, as Christ taught Peter, he that is washed requires to have his feet washed. In other words, the ransomed of the Lord coming in contact with sin require daily cleansing of the soul as the body requires its daily food. Therefore He exhorts to pray for the forgiveness of sin, and it is implied that what we ask Him to do for us we will be willing to do for others,—"Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us." We have no right to ask God to blot out our iniquities unless we are willing to forgive those who are indebted to us. In addition to that, we are to pray for guidance, "Lead us not into temptation." It is true God cannot lead men into temptation in the bad sense of the word, as

He cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempteth He any man; but temptation in this sense means the testing or the trying, as the Spirit led Christ into the wilderness to be tempted, which means that He was taken there to be tried or to be tested, and He stood the test and came from the wilderness as gold purified in the furnace. The thought here is that we are not to have so much confidence in our own strength, as to desire that we be led into places where we would be sorely tried or put to a severe test. Peter had unbounded confidence in himself, for when he heard how the disciples were to be tested he thought that though all men fall yet he could stand; but in after years he could see the necessity of this petition, Lead us not into places where we shall be sorely tried.

Deliver us from the evil, or the Evil One. No matter what men's theories are in these days with reference to the power of evil and a personal devil, no one can read the New Testament without coming to the conclusion that Jesus Christ believed in a personal devil; and He is here teaching His disciples to pray that they may be delivered from this Evil One —this one, who so desired to have one of these same disciples, that he might sift him as wheat. And surely, if those disciples who had such wonderful power imparted to them required to pray this prayer, how much more do we need to offer it up from our

hearts that we may be delivered from him, from his wiles and from his power.

In looking at this model prayer we see that it is wonderfully comprehensive. It takes in everything —the name of God, the kingdom of God, the will of God, our physical necessities—food and raiment implied—the pardon of our sins, our relation to others in the forgiving of those who trespass against us, our guidance through the difficult places and places of trial, and our deliverance from the Evil One. Like the law written on the tables of stone referring to God and referring to humanity, the foundation of all laws, so this prayer, the two tables you may say, referring to God, His kingdom, His will; referring to our needs, physical and spiritual, and our relation to others, is the foundation and the model for all prayer, —leaving out nothing and taking in everything that is necessary.

But this was not the only occasion on which Jesus taught His disciples how to pray. He taught them by example. When they would see Him rising a great while before day and getting alone with His Father, holding communion with God, a voice would say to them, "After this manner pray ye." When they heard that most wonderful of prayers which is recorded in the seventeenth of John, in which He was pleading for the union of His followers, that they

might be one, this same voice would say to the disciples, "After this manner therefore pray ye." Pray that My followers may be one in heart, that the world may see the union and believe that the Father hath sent Me. Then they go with him to Gethsemane. It may be that the very one who said, "Teach us to pray," was among the three who were nearest to Him on that wonderful occasion. They saw Him fall on the earth, they heard His cry, repeating the same words and requesting God to let the cup pass if it were possible, adding, "Nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done." That voice would again say to them, "After this manner therefore pray ye;" pray that the Father's will may be done though you may have to drink the cup to its bitter dregs. As they follow Him to the cross, see the men who pass by wagging their heads and spitting in His face, as they see the parched lips opened and hear the prayer, "Father forgive them," the voice comes again, "After this manner therefore pray ye;" pray for those who despitefully use you; pray for your enemies; pray for those who revile you, for I have set you an example.

He also teaches them from parables which He uttered, how they are to be in earnest and persevere in prayer. To illustrate this He takes the story of the unjust judge and the poor widow. This man has no regard for God, consequently he has no regard for his

fellowmen, he is one of the corrupt judges of whom there were so many in the eastern lands in those days. Here is the poor widow, helpless and defenceless; the adversaries, it may be, are trying to take away her children and sell them into captivity. She comes seeking for justice but this unjust man will not hearken to her voice. She cries in the court-room, "Avenge me of my adversary," she is repulsed and put out, but as he is going home he hears her cry again. He may get away from her then, but the first thing he hears in the early morning is the cry of this same woman; she follows him wherever he goes and at last he says, "Though I regard not God or man, yet lest she trouble me by her continual coming I will grant her request." And Christ virtually says "If an unjust judge will grant such a request because of the persistent way in which it is presented, how much more will your loving Father in heaven grant unto you the things He is only too willing to give if He sees you are in earnest in asking for them." "After this manner therefore pray ye." Following the example of this woman, come with your requests expecting an answer and keep on asking until you receive that which your soul desires. The reason why so many of our prayers are not answered is because they are not prayers, they are simply requests, and we would be surprised if they were answered. Suppose that

woman had gone to the unjust judge and said, "I am going to try to get justice, if I get it well and good, but if I do not get it, well I cannot help it." she would not have obtained that which she sought for. But she was so much in earnest that she said, "If there is justice in the land I am going to have it, he will either grant my request or I will perish in the effort to obtain what I want." Have we not children or friends in as great danger as her family were? Are we as anxious concerning them as she was? Do we come to God saying, "This is absolutely essential and I am going to seek until I find and knock until it is opened?"

Then take an example from His own life. A poor woman comes from the despised race of the Canaanites; she is a Syrophenician and an evil spirit has taken possession of her daughter; she has heard about Jesus; she believes He is able to do what she wants and to save to her the daughter that is so dear to her heart, so she comes to him. The disciples ask Him to send her away because she is troubling them. Still she persists in presenting her requests. He turns His back upon her and utters not a word, but she is not discouraged, she comes still closer. Then He acts in a strange way, speaks to her as perhaps He never spoke to another and says, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and give it to the dogs." In other words

He tells her she is only one of the Gentile dogs, one of those who are looked down upon by the Jews and spoken of in those disparaging terms; but she throws herself at His feet stating that she is willing to be called anything, and that as the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from the master's table, she is willing to take that place, but she will not go away until she gets that for which she came. She realizes that the case is desperate, that the life and the future of her daughter depends upon His actions, and she is willing to be anything or do anything so long as she gets her request answered. Then He looks at her and says, "Oh woman, great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt." Was He ever more pleased with anyone than He was with that woman because of her importunity, and I fancy I can hear Him say to the disciples as He points to this woman, "After this manner therefore pray ye." "Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find;" for the Lord is found by those who seek Him with all their hearts.

XVIII.

THE YOUNG RULER AND THE BLIND BEGGAR.

"And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved; for he had great possessions."—MARK 10: 22.

"And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus in the way."—MARK 10: 52.

It would be difficult to imagine a greater contrast than that which exists between these two men. Looking at them from the physical point of view we think of the young man as strong and healthy in the full enjoyment of all his faculties. We think of Bartimeus being blind, and a greater calamity can hardly befall a man as far as the physical is concerned. Then the one is a ruler and the other a beggar, the young man has great possessions and enjoys all the comforts and luxuries which wealth can provide, while the other is depending upon charity for his existence, often, no doubt, deprived of the necessaries of life. But there is a point in which they resemble each other—for they are both unhappy. We read of the young man being sorrowful, there is something for which his soul craves that he is not in possession of, for material things cannot satisfy the hunger of the spiritual nature. We would not be surprised to find Bartimeus

unhappy, and no doubt some looking at him in his miserable condition would say, If he had his sight and plenty of money he would lack nothing and enjoy happiness. But the young man was in possession of all this and still he was miserable, for a man's happiness consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth; happiness in humble homes, and discontent in palatial dwellings.

There is another point of resemblance—both of these men come in contact with Christ. The one runs to Him as He passes and falls at His feet hailing Him as Good Master, the other cries after Him as He is passing by and pleads for mercy from the Son of David. Then we come to a point of contrast. The young man goes away sorrowful, as one writer puts it, or grieved, as we read in another gospel—goes away more unhappy than he was when he came, while Bartimeus gets all he wanted, all he sought for, and follows Jesus in the way. Why this contrast? Is it because Jesus loved one more than the other? We do read that He looked upon the young ruler and loved him, we do not read any such statement concerning Bartimeus, and yet the latter was happy after his interview with Christ, while the former was made more miserable.

Let us now look at these men individually and we will find out the cause of all this. In the life of Bar-

timeus another morning has come and he is led out as usual by someone, takes his seat under the shadow of a friendly tree as he had done on many former occasions, expects that this day will be long and monotonous like those which have gone before it, but as the day advances, his ear, which is so sensitive, detects the sound of an unusual multitude of people who are passing by, he cannot see them, but he asks what it means, and the answer comes, "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by." A thrill of joy goes through his whole being. Can it be possible that this is the One concerning whom he has thought so much? Quick as a flash we hear his cry, "Jesus of Nazareth, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me." Those who are near him try to keep him quiet, but it is no use, for above the noisy crowd the beggar's voice is shrill and loud, "Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy upon me." Christ hears the cry, stops the procession, commands them to bring him, opens to the blind man the treasuries of heaven and says, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" The answer comes, "Lord that I might receive my sight," and Jesus responds, "Go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole," and the historian tells us, that he received his sight immediately and followed Jesus in the way.

We are informed then that it was by faith he was healed, and yet we look upon Jesus as the healer.

Sometimes faith is spoken of as that which saves. At others times Jesus is spoken of as the Saviour. It amounts to the same in the end. For example, suppose we are at a railway station, there is an engine and a long train of cars there all moving out, one man looking at them says, "That engine is drawing a train." Another man says "The couplings are drawing the train," and they are both right. The couplings would be of no use without the engine, but the engine must be united to the cars if they are to benefit by her power and be drawn along by her strength. The cars cannot go without the engine, neither can men be saved without Christ, but, as in the case of the train there must be a union, and we are informed that without faith it is impossible to please God, and by faith we are saved; for it is faith that links the helpless sinner to the powerful Saviour, and in this case Jesus said to Bartimeus, "Thy faith hath made thee whole." But how did he get this faith? We read that faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. No doubt he had often listened to those who were reading the Old Testament and how intensely interested he would be in that thirty-fifth chapter of Isaiah, where the Messiah is spoken of as the One who would open the eyes of the blind. Then men told him about this preacher from Nazareth, related to him the wonderful things that they had seen

Him do. He put the two together, and said, Such things were predicted concerning the Messiah, the Son of David, such things are being fulfilled by this prophet of Nazareth, therefore he is none other than the One who was to come. In this way he must have obtained his faith, the faith which looked upon Jesus not only as a man sent from God, but as the Son of David—another name for the long looked for Messiah.

But then men talk to us concerning a saving faith and a faith that is dead. Now we can get an illustration of these kinds of faith in the case that is before us. Bartimeus might have believed that he was blind, might have believed that this was the Son of David, able and willing to do more than he could think or ask, and still have remained in his blindness. Sometimes we have teachers, or men who call themselves teachers, and they will say to the sinner, "You believe that you are a sinner?" The response comes, "Yes, I know it." "You believe that Jesus Christ is the Saviour able and willing to save?" They are answered in the affirmative, and then they say, "Well that is faith, you are saved." Go to Bartimeus and say to him, "You believe you are blind?" He will answer, "I know it." "You believe that the one concerning whom you have heard is the Son of David, able and willing to save you?" He answers, "I believe it."

And then we say to him, "Therefore you have received your sight." But he will answer, "I cannot see." There must be in addition to all of this—contact between the blind man, and the One who is the light of the world. There must be contact between the sinner and the Saviour, as there must be a union between the cars and the engine, if the power of the one is to be imparted to the other; and this contact we see brought about by Bartimeus calling to Jesus and being brought to Him. In the Old Testament we are informed that whosoever calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. We cannot call on Him of whom we have not heard, but as soon as this blind man had heard and come to realize that this was the Lord he called upon Him. And so soon as he called difficulties came in the way, for the multitude tried to quiet him.

History has been repeating itself in all ages, and to-day, just as soon as a sinner, realizing that he is a sinner and that there is salvation in Christ, desires to come to the Saviour or to call upon Him, so soon will obstacles come in the way and the devil, through some agency, will try to come between the seeking sinner and the pardoning Saviour. But Bartimeus is in earnest, and when a man is in earnest there is nothing which can keep him from being saved. Frequently we meet with those who are not Christians

and we talk to them about their salvation. They say to us that they wouldn't mind if they were Christians, but they talk about it in a half-hearted way. Such men are not likely to be saved, for we read that men find the Lord when they seek Him with all their hearts, in other words, when they become in earnest; and as soon as a man sees his sin in the light of God's revealed truth, so soon will he desire to get away from it and cry as Bartimeus did to the Son of David. Jesus heard that cry, and let us remember that at that time He was going up to Jerusalem after being rejected by His brethren. His disciples were quarreling as to who should be the greatest in the kingdom, which they thought He was about to establish. Before Him were the agonies of Gethsemane and the shame of Calvary, and yet He could hear the cry of a poor beggar and take time to grant his request. To-day the sufferings are over, He is exalted a prince and a Saviour, but He still bends on earth a brother's eye, and His ear is still open to the cry of the needy. There is not a single soul on the face of the earth but can get a hearing from this Son of God, if they will only cry to Him in their sorrow as did this blind beggar near to the city of Jericho. Then Jesus opened to him, as it were, the storehouse of heaven and asked him what he wanted. He was a beggar and might have asked for alms, but what would all the gifts that could be given

be in comparison with his sight, and so he asked for that which was essential to his happiness.

The Lord often asks men the same question to-day, and says to them, "What wilt thou that I should do for thee." Some ask for wealth and some for power, others again that they may stand high in the estimation of their fellow-men, "But what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" And what gain would it be to Bartimeus to receive as a gift the Jordan valley, so long as he was without his sight? Then Jesus informed him that his faith had healed him, his eyes were opened to behold the glories of nature, he saw the multitudes that thronged his Master, but to him Jesus was the chief among thousands and the one altogether lovely. With a glad heart he followed Him in the way, to rejoice in the blessings he had received, and to worship and adore his benefactor.

How different in the case of the young ruler. He comes sorrowful, but he goes away a thousand times more sorrowful. Jesus, who was spoken of as a physician, diagnosed his case, saw at a glance the secret of all the trouble, and told him that he was lacking one thing, to sell his possessions, to give to the poor, to take up the cross, to follow in the way, and then he would have treasures in heaven. Now why did Christ make such a demand of this young ruler? He asked

nothing of Bartimeus, simply granted his request, but He never deals with any two in exactly the same way. He deals with men according to their individual need, and no doubt He saw that in the case of this young man, covetousness was the besetting sin, and that which was standing between him and the eternal life he sought. We can imagine a man going to a physician and informing the doctor that he is miserable and that he is anxious to be in good health. After an examination the physician informs him that one of his limbs is diseased and will have to be amputated, that if that is done he will enjoy health and live probably for many years, but if the operation is not performed he will never enjoy a day free from pain, and in a short time all will end in death. The man says, "I am very anxious to live and to be free from pain, but I cannot submit to the operation." And then the physician informs him that he can do nothing further for him, it is either the parting with the limb and the having the life, or retaining the limb and going down with it to death; and so the man goes away from the physician exceeding sorrowful, wanting to have the life, but refusing to part with that which is essential in the retaining of this life. It was something similar in the case of this young man. He wanted eternal life but could not have it, and at the same time retain his possessions, but he would not think of giv-

ing up the possessions, so he went away to be sorrowful all the days of his life, and then to go out, as far as we know, into the darkness.

Christ has told us that if the right eye or the right hand or the right foot offends they must be separated from the body, for it is better to enter into life maimed than to be cast out having all the members. We know when He is speaking in this way He is using figurative language, for it is not the physical eye or the physical hand or foot that can endanger the life of the soul, but it means there are things right in themselves, not only so but they may be sometimes as useful as the right eye or the right hand or foot, and yet these very things may threaten the life of the soul, and the only course then to be pursued is to be separated from them. With some, wealth is a power with which they can make friends who will receive them into everlasting habitations, with others, wealth may be like the right eye or the right hand endangering the life of the soul. And perhaps there is no sin greater or more frequently committed than the sin of covetousness. The love of money is still the root of all evil. Were it not for the desire to have wealth we would have no difficulty with the liquor traffic or the opium traffic, and a great many of the other evils which are ruining multitudes of our fellow-men. For men do not manufacture and sell liquor because they love to

see their fellow-beings intoxicated, but because there is money in it. They do not grow and dispose of opium for the love of seeing millions of Chinamen sent down to premature graves, but because there is money in it. In every walk of life we see how sin is eating like a canker, blasting the hopes and ruining the souls of multitudes. With some it may be sin of a different kind. But in every case, whatever the sin may be, the man must be separated from it before he can be saved, for Jesus came not to save men in their sins but to save them from their sins. He loved this young ruler, He was anxious to save him and the young man was anxious to be saved himself, but when it came to the question of parting with the possessions in order to obtain the life, he chose the possessions, and with a sorrowful heart went away lacking the one thing which was needful.

How many there are to-day in the same position in which this young man was. They would like to be saved and to be sure of a home in the house not made with hands, but there is some darling sin from which they do not wish to be parted, and so it is between the sin and the Saviour—His loving and compassionate eye resting upon them, and they going away sorrowful. Never did this young man enjoy a day of real happiness during the rest of his life. The memories of the past followed him, and the fear of the

future haunted him. So it is with those who come in contact with Christ, and have offered to them the treasures of heaven; they barter off these for some of the things of earth, for the sins or the possessions that are so dear to them.

The one man followed Jesus rejoicing, the other went away sorrowful. How often this happens in the house of God. Two men come in, sit down it may be in the same pew, both conscious that there is a something essential to the happiness they are not in possession of. The one opens his heart, receives the truth, takes up his cross to follow the Master and goes out of the sanctuary rejoicing. The other man refuses to comply with the conditions and goes out more sorrowful than he came in, having before him all the years the fear of death, and the dread of the judgment to come. How different would this young man's life have been had he complied with the conditions laid down by Jesus. He would have had that fullness of joy of which one of Christ's followers speaks, his name might have stood high in the list of the worthies, and he at last have received an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom, where there is joy and pleasures and everlasting treasures at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

XIX.

JESUS ONLY.

"They saw no man, save Jesus only."—MATTHEW 17 : 8.

These words, Jesus only, are the key to the scene described in this chapter. We are not going to discuss the question as to what mountain He was transfigured upon, whether Tabor or Hermon, for while the discussion might be interesting it would be of little practical importance. The cross upon which He was crucified is of very little importance compared with the Christ; the sepulchre in which He lay is of very little value compared with the risen Christ, who left it on the resurrection morning. In like manner we are more interested in that which transpired upon the mountain, and it is to this scene that our attention for some time shall be turned.

On the evening of the day we see four men going up the mountain-side. When they have reached the place where they intend to tarry, we see three of them sitting down upon the grass while the fourth is a little way from them in the attitude of prayer, and while He prays a wonderful change comes over Him, His face shines like the sun and His garments become bright as the light. In Exodus we read of Moses' face

shining with such a brightness that the people could not look upon it, but that glory came to Moses from without, it was the glory of God, shining upon his face during the days he was upon the mount, that gave it such brilliancy. We also read that the face of Stephen, when he was being stoned, shone like the face of an angel, but that glory also may have come from without, it may have come from the One who was standing at the right hand of the Father to receive His first martyr. But this glory which caused the face and the garments of Christ to shine and glisten was a glory from within, for while He was God manifest in the flesh, we might also speak of Him as God concealed by the flesh. As the veil in the ancient temple concealed the Shekinah from the gaze of the people, so His flesh, which was spoken of as a veil or a tent, concealed the divine glory so that He appeared to the multitudes like an ordinary man; but for the time being this glory shone through the flesh and the disciples beheld it. It may have been something like this which happened in the Garden of Gethsemane, when those who came to arrest Him fell to the ground as dead men. We know also that when He appeared to Saul on the way to Damascus His presence was brighter than the sun at noon-day: and we have a description of Him in Revelation as He appeared to John, and we know from the sacred

writings that He is the light of the celestial city, where they need no candle, neither light of the sun nor the moon, for the Lamb is the light thereof. And in after years when Peter is referring to this scene he says, "We saw His glory in the Mount," not the glory of God resting upon Him, but His own glory being made manifest.

In reading this we sometimes wonder if the people on the plains beheld the wonderful sight on the mountain-side; the cloud out of which the voice of God was heard, and this One, whose face shone with such brilliancy. Did the mothers carry out their little children to behold the wonderful sight? Did the shepherds talk of it on the following day, and did it bring to their remembrance stories they had heard of a strange sight the shepherds beheld on the plains of Bethlehem, when the glory of God shone around them and the heavenly choir sang "Glory to God in the highest?" We cannot tell; it may be that none save the three disciples beheld this wonderful scene.

Then Moses and Elias appear. They are recognized by these three disciples. They come as representative men—one representing the law and the other the prophets. How often, when Christ was teaching, men said to Him, "We be Moses' disciples," and others again referred to the prophecies concerning the Messiah. These two come to show or rather to

verify what Christ had so often said, that He came not to destroy but to fulfil the law and the prophets, that He and Moses and the prophets are in perfect harmony, that they spoke of Him and He came to fulfil their predictions. They came also to represent those who have and who shall pass through the Jordan of death, and those who shall never struggle with the last enemy; for Moses died in the Mount of Moab and was buried there, while Elijah ascended to the heavens in the chariot of fire. Moses representing all who have gone down to the grave or have been buried in the sea; Elijah representing that vast multitude, who at His appearing shall not taste of death, but shall be translated and rise to meet the Lord in the air. They come also to represent the church triumphant, while the disciples represent the church militant, showing that they are one, as we have it so clearly brought out in the eleventh and twelfth chapters of Hebrews, where the writer speaks of the illustrious dead who, without us, are not made perfect, showing the connection between those who have run the race and finished the course, with those who are still engaged in the contest. The disciples belong to the church that has still to fight with the evils within and the foes without, struggling on from victory to victory, while Moses and Elias represent those

who have entered into rest, who have reached the goal.

How little the people at the foot of the mountain knew of what was going on, such a little way from them. They never dreamt that the great Law-giver and the greatest of the prophets was so near to them. May it not sometimes be so in our lives? We do read that there is a great gulf between the place of the lost and the place of the saved, but we do not read of any gulf between the ransomed in heaven and the ransomed on earth. We often speak of the hand that is vanished and the voice that is still, but perhaps the glorified dead are nearer to us than we imagine. We are sure that there are guardian angels, yet our physical eyes cannot see them. It is only a theory, of course, that we cannot prove, and yet cannot deny, for if Moses and Elias were so near to these disciples is it not possible that some of the sainted dead may be near to those who are still running the race and fighting the battles on earth? There is one thing, however, that we are sure of, there is now unbroken connection between heaven and earth. Jacob saw the ladder on which angels were ascending and descending, and in the last verses of the first chapter of John we have it on the best authority that that ladder uniting heaven and earth is the Son of Man, who was transfigured on this mountain, in the presence of His disciples and of Moses and Elias.

Not only is there much to be seen on the mount, but there is also much to be heard. We listen to the conversation of Moses and Elias, and we would naturally think that they would be talking about the glorious place from which they came, or about the scene which they witnessed. There were wonderful things happened in the days of Moses while he was upon earth; he might have talked about the Red Sea and about Horeb, while Elijah might have spoken of Mount Carmel and the scenes in the days of Ahab, or of the chariot of fire in which he ascended. But their conversation is not about the things of the past, or the glory of the redeemed, but about an event that is to take place at Jerusalem. Luke tells us that they spoke of the decease which He, Christ, was to accomplish. In other words, the atonement was the subject of their conversation, and we find that that event is the centre of all history. To it all the sacrifices pointed, to it all the prophets looked forward; and about this decease at Jerusalem the evangelists speak at great length, while the epistles are full of it; and in Revelation John sees in the midst of the Throne a Lamb as it had been slain and hears the song of the multitude, "Thou art worthy, for Thou hast redeemed us with Thy blood." Then, as we listen we hear a voice, it comes from the excellent heaven, or out of the great and glorious cloud that overshadows them, it is the voice of the Father concerning the Son, for

the sake of the disciples no doubt it came, to confirm their faith in the divinity of their Master, for the voice said: "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." It would be impossible for these disciples ever to doubt His divinity after what they beheld, after what they heard, and one of these men, John, devotes his whole gospel to show that Jesus was the Christ, the One who was with the Father before the world was, the one who was equal with the Father, and who became flesh and dwelt among us, whose glory men beheld. When they hear this voice the disciples are full of fear and fall to the earth. Then they feel a gentle touch and they hear the voice that is so familiar to them, saying, "Fear not." It is the voice of the One who was not to break the bruised reed or quench the smoking flax; the voice that they heard when they were out on the troubled waters saying to them, "It is I, be not afraid;" the voice that spoke to their troubled hearts on the last night when He was with them, saying, "Let not your hearts be troubled."

We notice for a moment the impression which the scene made upon the disciples. Peter said, "It is good for us to be here;" and then he suggested making tabernacles for Moses and Elias and Jesus. It certainly was good to be there, to see what they saw and hear what they heard, but it would not have been

good to have remained even on that glorious Mount. It is true, they would have been away from the strife of tongues and from the tumults of the people, from the bickerings of the Sadducees and the enmity of the Pharisees, but it would have been a poor change for Moses and Elias; they had had enough of earth and its difficulties in the days of their flesh. And it would have been a sad thing for the world if they had remained on the mountain. There was work to be done on the plains. The sorrowing were to be comforted, the sick were to be healed, the destitute were to be looked after, the world was to be redeemed, and if all this is to be done they must leave this place that is forever hallowed by the scenes of the night, and come down among men. But the impression which they received will be always with them, strengthening their hearts and making them strong for the difficulties and temptations that lie ahead of them. It is a great thing and a necessary thing for us to have our mounts of transfiguration, our seasons when we can see Christ, the glorified, and have fellowship with Him, and be brought as it were into the very heavens. These times are essential, but it is not well to remain on the mount while there is so much work to be done on the plain or in the cities. For example, you see a Christian reading, say the best of books, he is in a comfortable room, his thoughts are on high things, he

is having fellowship with Christ, to him the very walls of that room may become glorious with the assurance of Christ's presence, it is a mount of transfiguration. How pleasant it is to be there. Without the wind is blowing and the snow is drifting; the thought comes to him that away in a distant part of the city there is a poor family, they have not enough coal to keep the house warm, they have not enough food to sustain them; his duty, nay, his privilege is to leave that room or that mount of transfiguration and to go to the help of the needy. That is what Christ did on this occasion to which we are referring. He was required at the foot of the mountain and He came down to do the work that no other could do. It is those who show their Christianity by deeds that are Christ-like, who shall stand highest at the last.

When the cloud disappeared we read that they saw no man save Jesus only. Moses had gone and Elias had gone, but Jesus remained. He was the only one who could do for them what they required; He alone could redeem them from sin; for there is only one Mediator, and there is no other name through which men can be saved. Then He could give them all the help and strength that was required, because, as He informed them on a future occasion, to Him was committed all power in heaven and in earth, hence He was able to supply all their wants, since in Him

all fullness dwelt. What is true of the disciples is true of us, in Him is our sufficiency, our redeemer and our strength. Not only so, but He is the only One who can be always with the Christian, for we have His promise that He will never leave nor forsake those who trust Him. He and He alone can accompany us when we are passing through the waters, for our dearest friends must part with us at the margin of the river, but we have His assurance that those who trust in Him shall be presented faultless on the other shore. He can give grace and wisdom, and at last glorify those whom He has redeemed and sustained. So when we read that Jesus only was left to the disciples, we are not to imagine that they met with any loss by the departure of Moses and Elias. Christ allowed those men to return to their glory and their rest, but He remained with His followers until He finished the work which He came to do, and the Christian has this assurance, that if he should lose everything upon earth, if even father and mother should forsake him, Jesus is still left, and will be with him as He was with those disciples, who beheld His glory on the Mount.

I suppose those who saw the disciples ascend the Mount in the evening, and saw them come down from it on the following morning, would have said that these disciples were the same men who ascended on

the previous night, and yet they were not the same men, because what they saw and what they heard made such an impression on them that they were different men from that hour until they entered into glory. Sometimes we see men go into a religious service, and in an hour or an hour and a half we may see them come out from the service, and we may say to ourselves they are the same men. but they may be very different, they may have heard in that meeting things which have changed their whole lives. They may have gone in captives bound by Satan, they may come out free men, having been made free by the Son, having received impressions and undergone a change that will be seen and felt all through the years of their lives. We know it was so in the case of these disciples, because Peter refers to it many years afterwards. One of these three was the first of the disciples to seal his testimony with his blood; another was the man whom Satan desired to have that he might sift him as wheat; the third and youngest was the one who was to live so many years, to be banished as a prisoner to Patmos and there to behold the glorious scenes recorded to us in the book of Revelation. For ever after this memorable night to these men Jesus was the chief among the thousands, the altogether lovely, the source of their comfort and of their future hope.

XX.

SOWING AND REAPING.

A SERMON TO YOUNG MEN.

"Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."—GALATIANS 6: 7.

From one point of view this is one of the most encouraging texts in the New Testament. Frequently those who are sowing the seeds of self-denial, of industry, and sobriety, become discouraged as they see so few signs of a harvest; while they behold others, who are sowing seeds of selfishness, self-indulgence and such like, getting along splendidly. They are like the psalmist who beheld the wicked flourishing as the green bay tree, having no afflictions, frequently no bands in their death, while the righteous—many of them—have troubles and difficulties accompanied with adversity.

But we must bear in mind that the period between seed-time and harvest varies in length. Sometimes the sowing and reaping are in the same day. For example, our Saviour scattered seeds of Gospel truth by Jacob's well at noon-day, and before the sun had gone down He and His disciples had gathered many sheaves of the harvest, for many Samaritans believed on Him, not only because of the saying of the woman,

but because they saw and heard Him for themselves. On the day of Pentecost Peter began to scatter the seed at nine o'clock in the morning, and before the twelfth hour three thousand were gathered into the fold. At midnight Paul and Silas began to sow in the prison-house in Phillippi, and before an hour passed they were reaping; for the jailer and his family believed and were baptized the same hour of the night. On the other hand we have had missionaries who were sowing ten, fifteen or twenty years before they saw any signs of harvest. The Lone Star Mission is an illustration of this. Some men have been sowing the seeds of self-denial for the sake of others all through their lives, and have passed away from earth without reaping the fruits of their labors.

A harvest delayed is not a harvest denied, and this is true of those who are sowing the seeds of righteousness, as well as of those who are sowing the seeds of iniquity. Sometimes the reaping, or part of the reaping, is done by men while they are upon earth, sometimes a great deal of it, or almost all of it, is done in eternity. The greatest of all teachers and the greatest of all artists has given to us a parable and a picture which illustrates this. He shows us a poor man named Lazarus who evidently was sowing the seeds of righteousness, but as far as he was concerned there was no reaping in this life; he received very little pity from men and longed for the crumbs that were not

given to him. He died, and the authorities gave him a lot in the Potter's Field. The funeral was hurried, they would say to the undertaker,

"Rattle his bones over the stones,
He is a poor pauper whom nobody owns."

The other man kept sowing the seeds of self-indulgence and selfishness, lived in luxury, clothed in fine linen and purple, faring sumptuously every day, dwelling in a magnificent mansion, having a retinue of servants to wait upon him, and a beautiful carriage in which to drive. At last he died. There was a great funeral, eulogies were pronounced over the dead, and a monument of stone, as cold and as hard as the heart of the man while he was alive, erected to him. Then our Lord draws aside the curtain and lets us see these men reaping—for all their life-time they were both sowing—the rich man is seen lifting up his eyes, being in torment, and craving for that which cannot be supplied, while Lazarus is beheld in Abraham's bosom enjoying the blessings and the glory of the Paradise of God.

In the natural world the harvest always follows the seed-time, and so shall it be and so it is in the spiritual world. A cup of cold water given in a disciple's name shall receive a disciple's reward, "for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." And as every seed bringeth forth according to its kind

in the natural world, so it is in the spiritual world, "For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting."

Not only shall men reap the same kind as they sow, but they shall reap in proportion as they sow. For example, a man does not expect to reap as great a harvest from a hundred bushels of seed as he would from a thousand bushels of seed. In like manner in the spiritual world they who sow sparingly shall reap sparingly, and they who sow bountifully shall reap bountifully. A great many Christian people are doing very little sowing in the spiritual world and they will consequently reap a small harvest. It would be well if this truth could be enforced upon many professing Christians who are sowing so sparingly, for there will also be degrees of glory, or, to put it in another way, some will have a greater harvest in glory and some a greater harvest in misery than others, according as they sow.

It must also be borne in mind that every man shall do his own reaping, for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall *he* also reap. It is true that no man liveth to himself, and that by a man's righteousness others are benefited, while by a man's sins others suffer and have to do part of the reaping; yet it is also true that every man shall bear his own sin, or, in other words, do his

own reaping. This has a dark and a bright side to it,—one of warning and one of encouragement.

I wish now to refer to some kinds of seed which men are sowing from which there will come a terrible harvest, and first of all I shall refer to the seeds of intemperance. This has to do with the body. Our bodies have been spoken of as temples which are not to be defiled by sin; they are spoken of also as tabernacles or tents, indicating that they are frail and may easily be injured, and anything which will in any way injure our bodies or unfit them for filling the place and doing the work which God intended them to do is an evil seed from which a bad harvest shall come. A large percentage of the men who wished to volunteer for service in the Spanish-American war were refused because of their physical unfitness, and it is asserted that ninety per cent. of those who were rejected were physically disqualified through the smoking of cigarettes. Multitudes of our boys and young men on this continent are at the present time sowing seeds through cigars and cigarettes, that cannot help bearing evil fruit as far as their bodies are concerned. While there are many things we might refer to which are injuring the bodies, especially of young people, perhaps there is no one thing, that is doing more injury to young men than strong drink. If we go to our asylums, to our hospitals, to our poor-

houses, to our jails and prisons, we will see multitudes who are now reaping from the seeds which they sowed in youth or in early manhood. The world is full of physical and mental and moral wrecks, and these men are simply reaping that which they sowed. But it is only the first-fruits of the harvest they reap here, for we are distinctly told that a drunkard shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven. And I might say that the saloons and taverns are not the only places where these seeds of intemperance are sown. I am frequently down in the heart of the city between twelve and two o'clock in the morning, and I often see young men going to their homes reeling under the influence of strong drink, which they obtained, not in the taverns, but in the club-rooms, and these club-rooms where liquor is sold are only gilded gateways leading to hell. Multitudes of our young men make the downward start here, and then, when they become slaves to drink, they will seek it in any hovel or den where it can be procured. It is a question if all clubs whether liquor is sold there or not, are not injurious. At first, the Lord placed the inhabitants of the earth in families, but in this age we are placing them in clubs and in societies, and these things are interfering with the home, and whatever interferes with the home interferes with the nation; for the State is founded on the home life of the people, and if the

home is destroyed the State cannot exist. But if those who become intemperate and become drunkards shall reap a harvest, what about those who manufacture and sell? Are they not sowing and shall they not reap? Is there not a woe pronounced upon the man who puts the bottle to his neighbor's lips and maketh him drunk? Whether he does this to get the man's money or treats him in order to get his custom it is all the same; the whole business is iniquitous and the seeds of intemperance shall bring forth in time or eternity a fearful harvest.

I shall now refer to gambling, for while many are perishing through intemperance a multitude is also perishing through gambling, and in this country men seem to have a mania for it. We know the fight that they are having in Vancouver at the present time with reference to this subject. Now what is gambling? It is a man either losing his money without getting an equivalent for it, or gaining money without giving an equivalent either in the sweat of his brain or the sweat of his brow. The winner is one who has obtained money without giving any value for it. Those who gamble are frequently spoken of as sports, but the right name for them is thieves. Let me illustrate. Here is a man who has, say, ten or fifteen dollars a week of a salary, he has a wife and family to support. The law of the State, apart from the law of

God, would compel that man to support his family when he is able to do it; but instead of taking the money home to them he goes to a pool-room, begins to gamble, and the money is squandered. Some of those who are more expert in the business than he is, gain the money, and he loses it. What is the result? His wife and family are denied many of the necessaries of life, the children may often be hungry and not have sufficient clothing, while the young men who have gained that money are holding high heads, squandering the money, and calling themselves sports. They have in their pockets the money that belongs to those children and that woman, and if that is not dishonesty I don't know what it is. Not only so but those young men become so fascinated with the gambling that it becomes a kind of mania, and as the bird becomes fascinated with the hawk and flies into the very claws of the enemy, so these men go on from bad to worse until they perish through this vice. I know that many young men in our city are being ruined through gambling, and that sin leads on to others, for the beginning of sin is like the letting in of waters. But what about the men who keep these places, and are ruining these young men? Are they not sowing and shall they not reap? If our Lord were talking to some of these men would He not say to them, as He did say to such in the days of his flesh, "Ye

vipers and serpents, how shall you escape the damnation of hell?" There is a reaping time ahead for such men as surely as they have sown.

We come now to another kind of seed which men are sowing—the seeds of covetousness, and covetousness shows itself in two ways—in witholding more than is meet, and in striving to get in an unlawful way that which we cannot obtain in a lawful manner. Here is a man, for example, and he informs us that he does not know the taste of liquor, he does not smoke, he has never gambled nor squandered his money foolishly, he has denied himself many of the luxuries of life, he has sown the seeds of industry and of economy, he has amassed a considerable amount of wealth and he congratulates himself upon it all and glories in his self-righteousness, or his negative righteousness. But at the same time he is sowing the seeds of selfishness and penuriousness, he is like the man in the parable whose fields brought forth plentifully until he had not room enough to store his goods, and then he resolved that he would build new barns in which to store them, saying to his soul, "There is much goods laid up for many years," but never giving a thought to the many who were hungry and destitute in his own city or in other parts of the world. We have such men in the world to-day, and the great weed of selfishness or stinginess destroys all the other excel-

lent qualities of industry and sobriety. Such men are looked upon as misers, despised by their fellow-men, rich as far as the things of the world are concerned, but poor and miserable and destitute in the sight of God. It is because of covetousness and because so many people are sowing these seeds that there are such multitudes in the world to-day who are in poverty and in misery. Covetousness accounts for most of the grinding done to-day by many of the great corporations and monopolies by which the poor are kept on starvation wages, while the monopolists are amassing untold wealth. But covetousness shows itself not only in witholding what we should give, but in trying to get that which we cannot lawfully obtain. In this age there is a desire on the part of young men to make haste in getting wealth. They are not willing to begin at the foot of the ladder where there fathers commenced, they want a quicker way. It used to be in our stores that people climbed the stairs but now they go up in elevators, and so these people want to become wealthy but they don't want to wait, taking a step at a time, they want to begin where their fathers left off. In order to do this they begin to speculate A young man who is say cashier in a bank will take some money that does not belong to him without telling his employers, thinking he can speculate, make a lot of money and put it back before it is missed. In

that way many young men get into difficulty, get thrown out of their situations and often sent to the prison-house. Every day we see such cases reported in our newspapers. Men become swindlers and become dishonest in order to get wealth, and the root of it all is the love of money. This desire or craving for money without waiting to earn it honestly leads to robbery and from that to murder. You have all read the story of the terrible tragedy in our own city and on this very street, a few days ago. It was the desire to get the man's money, which led those men to enter his store as they did, and to commit that foul murder. I shall only refer to the scene I witnessed on that night in the emergency ward of the General Hospital. There was Varcoe. He knew that in a few hours he would pass away, he felt the cold sweat of death even then upon his brow. He was making arrangements for the guardianship and care of his two little motherless children. He was praying to the God of heaven to forgive the sins of the past and to have mercy upon him for the sake of Christ the Saviour. There were brought into the ward the two murderers, one of them with his head terribly battered and bandaged, the other carried in on a stretcher, bleeding from the wound he had received from the policeman's bullet. A crown attorney and officers of the law were taking evidence, the doctors were doing all they could to sus-

tain the lives of those who were wounded, the nurses, so attentive and so kind, were ministering to the wants of the suffering, with as much gentleness and feeling as if these men had been their brothers. While this is going on one of the murderers is having his wounds dressed, and at the same time the oaths are coming from him like the foulness from an open sepulchre. The one man praying to be forgiven for Christ's sake, while the other was blaspheming that sacred name, and as you saw, by the papers a few days afterwards he went down to the grave with the oaths upon his lips. These three men were young, strong and in the prime of life, and might have accomplished great things for God and humanity. But through the covetousness which was the sin leading to this tragedy, two of them are dead, and the other will doubtless be executed. Then see the large circle affected; the families from which these murderers come, the family from which Varcoe was taken. As I looked at the little girl of seven, whose hair was singed by one of the bullets that killed her father, and saw her weeping, I thought I could hear the voice of Jesus saying, "Better for a man that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck and he drowned in the depths of the sea than that he should offend one of these little ones." This is the result of sin and of the sin of covetousness. All of us are sowing and all of us shall

reap in time or eternity. "For God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Some one may say, "Now the door is closed, I have been sowing, sowing seeds of iniquity, and now there is no hope, I must reap the terrible harvest from that which I have sown." To such I can say that there is one door of hope. More than twenty-six hundred years ago a prophet who had a very clear vision looked down through the centuries and he saw one coming as a Lamb to the slaughter, bearing upon Himself the sins of men, their iniquities and their stripes, coming to make an atonement for their sins and to reap for them the harvest of their iniquity. Jesus Christ, who, in the fullness of time, became manifest in the flesh, taking upon Himself our nature and bearing our sins in His own body on the tree, can do our reaping for us and will do it if we ask Him and trust Him. With Him on the cross there were two malefactors, one on the right hand and the other on the left. Both these men had been sowing the seeds of iniquity, one of them asked Christ to reap for Him the harvest, to remember Him when He would come into His kingdom, and to this man Jesus made answer, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." The other man went down to the grave in his sin, to reap in eternity the harvest from the seed which he had sown. The scene on the cross is repeating itself, and has been

repeating itself during all the centuries which have intervened. There is one of two things every one of us must do — either get Christ to bear our sins and reap for us the harvest, or else take those sins with us to the judgment and reap throughout eternity. Behind every one of us there is a history and ahead of every one of us there is a destiny. They that sow to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everylasting, they that sow to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's son, cleanseth from all sin, and if we have come to see ourselves to-night as sinners in God's sight we can get this cleansing, but apart from Christ there is nothing for us, but to reap the consequences of the sins we have committed.

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